### Albright holds off on Mideast trip

WASHINGTON (AFP) - U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will not meet with Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon and has no plans to travel to the Middle East as previously planned, the State Department and Monday. Sharon will meet in New York Friday with Middle East coordinator Dennis Ross but the State Department denied the lower-level U.S. representation was a snub intended to highlight U.S. frustration with Israel's decision to freeze the Wye River peace deal. "The suggestion that there's some problem between us and the Israeli foreign ministry is simply incorrect," said State Department spokesman James Rubin. He said Sharon had offered to meet with either Ross or Albright to discuss the Mideast peace process. Albright had been scheduled to travel to Israel this month to take stock of progress in implementing the Wye River land-for-security deal.

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation جوردان تابعو بومية سيغشيُّ تمسر بِٱلأَنْجَلَيْزِية عن المؤسسة المنحفية الأردبية «الرايء

**Number 7036** Volume 24

AMMAN TUESDAY, JANUARY 5, 1999, RAMADAN 18, 1419

#### irag formally seeks replacement of U.S., British aid workers

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The Iraqi government on Monday formally requested the replacement of U.S. and British humanitarian workers in Iraq following last month's air strikes by the U.S. and Britain against Iraqi targets. In an aide-memoire transmitted to the U.N. Security Council, the authorities said that "Iraq cannot guarantee the safety of personnel of these two nationalities... We have accordingly requested that the personnel in question be replaced in view of prevailing circumstances arising out of the Anglo-American aggression," the note said. John Mills, the spokesman for the U.N. humanitarian programme in Iraq, declined to comment on the Iraqi demand but told AFP that "the United Nations is studying the issue closely." Western diplomats said that a total 14 British and U.S. nationals had been informed that the Iraqi authorities wanted their replacement.

Price: Jordan 200 fils

#### Hizbollah Katyushas slam border area

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MARJAYOUN (AFP) -The Lebanese occupation resistance group Hizbollah Monday fired three Karyusha mekets at an Israeli position near the Lebanese-Israeli international border, security sources said. The Katyushas, which caused no casualties, fell near two Israeli tanks driving out of the border post of Oabaa, which overlooks the village of Houla in the Israelioccupied buffer zone of southem Lebanon, they said. The Islamic Resistance, Hizbolbh's military wing, claimed

#### Peace fund finds \$60m for Palestinians

TEL AVTV (Reuters) — A fund conceived by former Isaeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres and the head of the World Bank has raised \$60 million for investment in Palestinian businesses in the West Bank and Gaza, Peres said on Monday. The Peace Technology Fund, which will make its first investments in 1999, seeks to support the growth of the Palestinian private sector and joint ventures with Israeli and international

#### Assad due to be reelected next month

BEIRUT (AFP) — Syrian

President Hafez Al Assad is expected to be reelected president for a fourth term since 1970 in a popular referendum to be held next month, the Lebanese newspaper Al Nahar reported Monday. "A referendum for the reelection of Assad will most probably take place Feb. 8 after a commission presided by Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam takes the necessary measures," the newspaper said. "A popular [electoral] campaign will precede the referendum," the daily added. Assad. 69, has been in power since 1970 and has completed four seven-year terms.

#### U.S. embassy in Syria reopens

DAMASCUS (R) - The American embassy in Damascus on Monday announced a partial resumption of consular services 16 days after being damaged by demonstrators protesting against the U.S.-led air strikes on Iraq. The embassy said in a statement that the mission would resume some immigrant visa and other services on Tuesday but that visas for visitors, students and businesspeople would not be issued until further notice.

#### Yemen will not join Commonwealth

SANAA (R) - Yemen said on Monday it was abandoning a bid to join the Commonwealth group of nations fol-A STATE OF lowing a diplomatic row with 57. \ Bal (55.1 · Britain over the killing of four Law (Mark) Western hostages in the Arabian state. A Yemeni foreign البع الشعادية المالي. التعاليمة المالية ministry statement said com-ments attributed to a British government official that Yemen's bid to join the Commonwealth would not succeed "stem from lack of keenness for clear relations between the two govern-

#### **UAE's population** grows to 2.776 m

ABU DHABI (R) - The Population of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) swelled to some 2776 million in 1998 compared to 2.624 million the previous year, figures released by the planning ministry on Monday showed. The proportion of the population in work also rose in the same period. with the workforce growing to 1.378 million in 1998 against 1.330 million in 1997.

## Two Israeli women injured in Hebron attack

Israeli women were wounded Monday when Palestinians riddled their vehicle with automatic rifle fire in the divided city of Hebron — the first political violence in the West Bank of the year.

One of the women was hospitalised with serious wounds and the other was in moderate condition, police said. A third woman was slightly cut by shattered

All three women were from the Jewish settlement of Kiryat Arba. located outside Hebron.

Their GMC utility vehicle was hit by at least 21 bullets in the attack near Al Ibrahimi mosque, a shrine sacred to both Muslims and Jews in an Israeli-controlled sector of Hebron.

Israel Radio said the gunmen apparently fired from the roof of a building in the Palestinian-ruled part of the city of 140,000 and Israeli leaders called on the Palestin-

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's

parliament voted overwhelm-

ingly Monday to hold early

national elections on May 17.

formally launching what is

expected to be a long and

bruising electoral campaign

likely to leave the beleaguered

peace process in limbo. In suc-

legislature and move the polls

up from their scheduled date

Under Israeli election rules.

two votes will be held in paral-

iel - an election by propor-

tional representation for the

120-member parliament or

Knesser, and a straight majori-

ty vote for the prime minister.

If no candidate for prime

in the year 2000 to May 17.

cessive second

and third read-

ings of the

early-elections

bill. deputies

voted 85 to 27

to dissolve the

Israel officially

heads into long

election campaign

Netanyahu taces

possible challenge

National Authority (PNA) to hunt down the attackers. The Israeli army imposed a curtew on Palestinian residents living in the Israeli-controlled zone of Hebron and sealed all entrances to the Palestinian-

run part of the city. Some Palestinian youths responded to the Israeli clampdown by throwing stones at soldiers guarding the Jewish enclave. Two people were wounded by Israeli troops firing rubber-coated metal bullets, witnesses said.

Police identified the gunshot victims as Fanny Alazra, 54, who had serious wounds to the chest and neck, and Florie Hofi, 45, who was moderately hurt. They were hospitalised in Jerusalem.

Four-fifths of Hebron has been under Palestinian control since January 1997, but about 400 militant Jewish settlers live in an enclave in the remaining fifth of the city.

(Continued on page 12)

minister gains 50 per cent of

the vote on May 17, as appears

likely, a second-round run-off

between the two leading con-

tenders will be held on June 1.

virtually all members of the

opposition as well as a large

number of deputies from

Prime Minis-

ter Benyamin

Netanyahu's

badly splin-

party coali-

seven-

tered

The bill was supported by



An Israeli plain-clothed security officer questions a Palestinian boy in the West Bank town of Hebron after suspected Palestinian militants fired on a van carrying Israeli settlers as it passed through the divided city injuring two women passengers on Monday (AP photo)

## U.S.:Iraqi aircraft probe no-fly zones

Agencies

IRAQI AIRCRAFT probed the edges of the U.S.-enforced no-fly zones over traq during the past several days without drawing retaliatory attacks by U.S. warplanes, a Pentagon official said Monday.

The incursions were the latest in a series of Iraqi challenges to the no-fly zones in the wake of last month's four-day "Desert Fox"

air campaign by U.S. and British forces. There have heen instances

tion. Deputies in the past several days of said Netanyahu fought until Iraqi aircraft attempting to fly the last minute to hold off the curly polls, even trying to offer on the edge of the no-fly zone and even entering the no-fly the vacant finance minister's zone for brief periods," said portfolio to former foreign the Pentagon official, who minister David Levy in a spoke on condition of failed replay of an earlier bid to win the backing of Levy's anonymity.

The official declined to say few supporters in the Knesset. when or where Iraqi aircraft crossed into the no-fly zones.

"We don't comment on each attempt for operational reasons," he said. However, he said the incursions did not draw any attacks by U.S. warplanes patrolling the zones. "We do maintain robust rules of engagement that allow us

The White House said Monday the United States would continue to enforce no-fly

to defend ourselves and

enforce the no-fly zone," he

Iraqi leadership holds the zones. president has made clear

that he plans to enforce the no-fly zones." White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said. It is an important part of our containment policy limiting his Ilragi President Saddam Hussein] ability to threaten his neighbours and repress his own people," Lockhart added.

(Continued on page 12)

## Kuwaiti deputy premier arrives today on ground-breaking visit

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN - A Kuwaiti minister is due in Amman on Tuesday for a ground-breaking visit expected to help bury a legacy of strained ties that resulted from the 1990-91 Gulf crisis, officials said.

The visit of Kuwait's deputy prime minister and minister of state for cabinet affairs, Abdul Aziz Al Dakhil, comes two days after Kuwait sent an invitation to Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Al Khatib to visit the emirate.

Dakhil is expected to deliver a message to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on bilateral ties and regional developments, the Jordanian officials added.

Khatib told the Jordan Times on Monday he had accepted the invitation to go to Kuwait. However, he said, no date has been set vet.

"I have sent a reply message to Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah on Sunday expressing apprecia-tion for his noble feelings and congratulating on the recovery of His Majesty King Hussein, and also thanked him for the invitation to visit Kuwait. which I hope to make soon," Khatib added.

Informed sources told the Jordan Times that Kuwait sent two official messages to Jordan within one week.

"Jordan received two warm messages from Kuwait during the last week," one source said. "The first message came after Prince Hassan's call in the opening address before the emergency session of the Arab Parliamentary Union that was held in Amman on Dec. 27, for the release of the Kuwaiti prisoners of war [PoWs] held

"A few days later. Sheikh Subah sent another message to his Jordanian counterpart inviting him to visit Kuwait and also offering congratulations on the King's full recovery, wishing him a safe return

A senior official described the Kuwaiti invitation as crowing an end to the eight-year strain in ties between the two

"We hope our contacts will further boost ties and return them to pre-crisis levels of warmth." a senior official said.

Arab diplomats said they expected Dukhil to extend his government's appreciation for Amman's stance during the four-day campaign of U.S.-led air strikes on Iraq last month.

The trip will be the first by a top-level Kuwaiti minister since the Gulf crisis soured bilateral ties because of Amman's perceived tilt towards Iraq, which occupied Kuwait for seven months in August 1990.

Jordan condemned the invasion, but, unlike other Arab countries, it refused to join the U.S.-led military alliance that later liberated Kuwait.

(Continued on page 12)

## **Prospects for holding Arab** summit slim, official says

Bv Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — The prospects of holding an Arab summit to discuss the U.S.-led air strikes against Iraq the Iraqi situation are slim, a senior official said yester-

"It might be possible to hold an Arab ministerial meeting on Jan. 24 to discuss the U.S.-led air strikes against Iraq over arms inspections," the official who did not wish to be named, told the Jordan Times, "But differences may prevent the ministers from reaching a decision on the holding of an Arab

summit," he added. Arab foreign ministers are due to meet at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo on Jan. 24 upon Yemen's request.

The meeting was postponed from Dec. 30 after a secret visit by Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal to Cairo last week\_ officials said.

Reuters on Sunday quoted a senior Gulf official as saying that even the Jan. 24

meeting might be delayed due to "sharp differences among Arab leaders."

But Arab League Secre-

tarv General Esmat Abdel Meguid confirmed that the meeting will take place on the planned date. The January 24 meeting is still on and there is no

intention to delay or postpone it. Kuwait [Sunday] confirmed its attendance. Abdul Meguid told reporters Sunday in Cairo.

Jordan also said it would attend any meeting to discuss Arab affairs.

"Jordan always supports calls for holding an Arab meeting for the benefit of the Arab World," Information Minister Nasser Judeh said last week. "But we believe an Arab summit needs a clear agenda in order to guarantee that it would achieve its aspired

The foreign ministers of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman and Syria met in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Hurghada on Saturday to discuss the ministerial meeting.

goals and objectives."

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said the talks were aimed at "coming up with a general agreement on what the foreign minis ters meeting can produce.

Another meeting between Jordanian, Egyptian and Palestinian officials is also expected soon to coordinate positions.

"As part of our ongoing coordination and consultations, three ministers from the three countries are expected to meet after Eid Al Fitt," a senior official

"The meeting is vital to clarify in advance what are we going to achieve in the summit, " he added.

If the Arab League ministers agree on holding the summit, it will be the first since the Arab leaders met in Cairo in 1996 to discuss the peace process.

Iraq has attacked Abdul Meguid. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and other Arab leaders, accusing them of postponing the ministers meeting to contain Arab anger against the air strikes.

## U.S. cautious on euro, sees no threat to dollar

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States reserved judgment on Europe's new currency on Monday as it shrugged off fears the euro could pose a challenge to the U.S. dollar's status as the world's top reserve currency.

Instead, top U.S. officials reiterated their longstanding mantra that what is good for Europe will be good for the United States, adding only that the euro's long-awaited launch underscored the need for sound economic policies at home.

"It will be a currency like all other currencies," U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin told reporters after a speech at the National Press Ċlub.

"As we've said many times, if it's good for Europe then that's good for the United States. A strong Europe is good for the United States,"

he added. The subdued reaction in Washington was in marked contrast to the euphoric mood in much of Europe, where investors as well as politicians hailed the historic launch of a single currency for nearly 300 million Euro-

On U.S. foreign exchange markets, the euro slipped against the dollar on the first day of official trading after the currency produced a strong performance against the greenback in European and Asian trading overnight.

(Continued on page 12)

Rubin, asked about the euro's strong debut, stuck to his routine of not commenting on day-to-day market movements and said it was normal for markets to fluctu-That is not where our

focus needs to be. Our focus needs to be on keeping our house in order. If our house is in order then we'll be in fine shape," he said. Washington's low-key

approach to the euro reflects U.S. concerns that Europe might turn its back on problems elsewhere in the world economy as it concentrates on making its historic currency union work. At the same time, U.S.

officials have said the focus on the euro must not deflect from structural reforms to reduce sky-high unemployment rates in much of

White House spokesman Joe Lockhart also took a cautious line on the euro, insisting there was no fear the currency would pose any danger to the primacy of the dollar in foreign exchange transactions around the globe. "Clearly the United States

has always supported an integrated, stable Europe and steps forward to that goal are supported by the United States government," he said. Rubin and his deputy Lawrence Summers said the dollar's future would depend crucially on the pursuit of sound, growth-oriented economic policies in the United

"I think ... the euro just reemphasises how important it is that we focus on our own policies and continuing to make the United States a place where people want to invest their capital by having sound policies here - particularly by maintaining our fiscal discipline." Rubin

And Summers, appearing on CNBC television earlier on Monday, added: "As far as the dollar is concerned. the buck stops here. As long

## Commission bows to Bank of England on euro terminology

BRUSSELS (AFP) - Its official: whenever more than one Euro are gathered together they shall be known as "euros" -and its all thanks to the Bank of England. The European Commission confirmed on Monday that it had decided to ignore the official documents authorising the launch of the new currency, in which the English plural of one euro is written without any s' at the end. All press releases and official documents from the EU executive will refer to one euro, but two, ten or one hundred euros, chief spokeswoman Martine Richaerts confirmed. "In the official text adopted by the council of ministers, there is no s, but we saw that the Bank of England had adopted this usage so we decided to follow," she said. The plural of euro is either written or pronounced with an s in 10 of the 11 official EU languages, the exception being German, which keeps the word the same for both the singular and the plural. Appropriately -- some might say -- for a currency that has been created largely on Germany's terms, it is the German usage that will be reflected on the standardised euro notes when they are intro-

as we keep our fundamentals strong. I think the dollar (and) U.S. borrowing costs will do just fine."

The 11 nations that adopted the euro have about the same economic output and share of world trade as the United States.

That weight has prompted some analysis to speculate whether investors and central banks may switch their holdings from the dollar into the euro.

That would make it harder for the United States to attract capital that it needs to finance its ballooning trade deficit, push up U.S. interest rates and put a damper on



A man on stilts in euro colours lifts the beret of a passer-by in the '24 hours of the euro' parade on Monday in Paris to celebrate the birth of Europe's common currency (AFP photo)

## Cult member protests innocence; Ecevit revives bid to lead Israel issues deportation orders Turkey's next government

Hunched over on a bench in an Israeli magistrate's court Monday, a member of the Denverbased doomsday cult said he never planned to harm anyone.

However, Israeli police believe the suspect and others in the Concerned Christians group hatched a plot to commit acts of violence near Jerusalem holy sites in hopes of triggering a bloody Armageddon that would bring about the return of Christ.

"I am not here to hurt anybody." the suspect, identified in court documents as John Bayles, said in a soft voice.

Bayles, of Denver, and two. other men - identified by their lawyer as Terry Smith, 42. of Eagle, Colorado, and Eric Malesic, 36, of Westminster, a Denver suburb appeared before the court

All three denied the allegations and were ordered held another 48 hours until police

complete their investigation. Another 11 people alleged to belong to the cult - including six children — were ordered deported and have three days

to appeal. Israeli Interior Minister Eli Suissa suggested that the suspects had planned to commit suicide and not intended to harm anyone else.

"We don't want such people here, not that we are against tourists coming. But they shouldn't do things we don't want them to do," Suissa said on Israel army radio.

The 14 were detained Sunday in raids on two homes in the Jerusalem suburbs of Moza and Mevasseret Zion.

Officials said the three men in detention would be ordered deported pending completion cions that they planned to harm holy places in Israel.

"That is totally denied." Smith, wearing a green wind-breaker and Reeboks stripped of their laces, said when told of the police suspicions.

When Judge Nira Diskin asked Malesic if he would accept public defender Eran Avital as his lawyer, the bearded American calmly eyed Avital for a moment, then pronounced: "That's fine."

Avital, who is representing all three men, said he believed the charges would be dismissed by the next court appearance in 48 hours, although he did not see much of the evidence.

"It's all classified," he said. Israeli officials fear that the Concerned Christians may only be a forerunner and that scores of other religious extremists will be drawn to pre-millennial Jerusalem to live out apocalyptic fantasies, including mass suicide.

Some 4.5 million tourists, including many Christian pilgrims, are expected to visit the Holy Land this year, double the usual number.

The Denver cultists were arrested by a newly formed Israeli task force consisting of police, agents of the domestic Shin Bet security service and

the Mossad spy agency. Members of the Concerned Christians, a cult which counts only several dozen members. began selling their homes in and around Denver this fall. Their leader, Monte Kim

Miller, believes he will die on the streets of Jerusalem in December and be resurrected. Miller was not among those detained, and police said he



Holding a coat over his head, John Bayles of Denver, a member of the Denver-based doomsday cult The Concerned Christians, is led by Israeli police detectives to a hearing at Petah Tikvah's magistrates court Monday. Israel on Monday ordered 11 members of the cult deported and brought two others before a magistrate on suspicion that they plotted a Jerusalem shootout with police in hopes it would bring Jesus Christ's return (AP

Roggeman, who has been fol-

lowing the case on his own

time, recognised another of the

alleged cult members arrested

in the suburb of Moza from a

He identified a woman hold-

ing a baby as she gets into a

police vehicle as Annie Bion-

do Malesic and told The Asso-

ciated Press that her mother

had identified her as well. Her

relationship to Eric Malesic

newspaper photo.

The 14 cult members arrived in Israel in small groups in September and settled in two spacious suburban homes in Moza and Mevasseret. They were under police surveillance for several weeks.

Israeli police have said the cult members planned to provoke bloodshed by attacking policemen on the streets of Jerusalem, a city with sites sacred to Judaism and Islam. Members of the group believe that this act would hasten the Second Coming.

was not clear. A licence plate on a Yamaha off-road motorcycle left on the Denver policeman Mark lawn in front of the house in Moza was registered to Gary and Cheryl Schmidt of Yellowjacket, about 400 kilometres Southwest of Denver.

Neighbours, who knew the couple who lived in the house as Gary and Cheryl, said they had disappeared about a month ago. First Sgt. Ilan Granot told the

court there was concern Bayles might harm himself and that he was being watched closely.

"I don't feel I pose a threat to

## Cypriot: ministers resign in missile row

ish leftist leader appeared

ready Monday to revive his

bid to form a secular coali-

tion government after a sur-

prise declaration of support

from former Premier Tansu

In an abrupt about-face,

Ciller said Monday her cen-

tre right True Path party

would now back a govern-

lawmaker who picked up

efforts to form a government

after Ecevit's own attempt to

Acting Premier Mesut Yil-

in a mafia scandal in

could win a vote of confi-

dence," Yilmaz said.

Two

rejected.

do so failed.

NICOSIA (R) - Two Cyptiot ministers resigned on Monday after their Socialist party quit the governing coalition over the scrapping of plans to deploy anti-arcraft missiles on the divided island.

Defence Minister Yiannakis Omirou and Education Minister Lycourgos Kappas submitted their resignations to President Glascos Clerides early on Monday. Government sources said their successors would probably be named and sworn in on Tuesday.

The socialist EDEK party withdrew from the coalition on Saturday after Clerides cancelled plans to deploy the Russian-made missiles. Turkey had vowed to prevent them arriving, militarily if necessary.

Omirou, vice-chairman of the socialist party, had harsh words for Clerides' change of

"There was severe injury to the sovereign rights of Cyprus. It was a national humiliation." he told reporters.

The decision was praised abroad but condemned by opposition parties who were scathing about a compromise to place the rockets on the Greek island of Crete.

finally emerges from the deal-making will be deal-making will be Turkey's sixth since 1995. Squabbles between centreleft and centre-right parties and disagreements over whether to allow Islamic leaders a role in any new government have slowed the

Ecevit had tried for three weeks to form a coalition that shut out the Islamic ment led by Bulent Ecevit, a Virtue Party, the largest coalition she had previously party in parliament, but his bid failed when he was Ciller said she would not unable to bring Ciller on support premier-designate Yalim Erez, an independent board.

coalition-building.

Now, with Yilmaz's and Ciller's support, Ecevit could command a majority in the 550-seat parliament. Erez, a defector from Ciller's party, had won the maz, whose government fell conditional support of Yil-maz and Ecevit. If he loses

November, said his centreit, Erez would have to give right party would also back Ecevit's Democratic Left up on forming a govern-Erez had hoped to submit "For the first time, there a proposed cabinet to Presiseems to be a consensus that

dent Suleyman Demirel this

influential military warned Islamic sympathisers Monday against trying to exploit the nation's government crigovernme willegal

The warning came in an denouncing statement recent claims in Islamic newspapers and broadcasis that some in the military sympathised with the Islamic movement. "Attempts to divide the armed forces by presenting some officers as being favourable are being observed with sorrow at a time when stability is required for the urgent formation of a government." the General Staff said.

"The Turkish armed forces are maintaining their struggle against those who want to form a state based on Islamic laws."

Although an overwhelm-ngly Muslim nation, Turkey's constitution mandates a strictly secular government. The military pressured the republic's first Islamic-oriented government out of power last year.

## **NEWS IN BRIEF**

#### 28 killed in Somalia

MOGADISHU (AFP) - At least 28 people were killed and 10 others wounded when an anti-tank rocket was fired at a bus near the southern Somalia town of Baidoa, the newspaper Xogogal reported Monday. The paper said that the bus was transport- 5ing civilians from Baidoa to Mogadishu at the time of the attack, which it said was carried out by the Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA). The wounded and those who died were taken back to the main hospital in Baidoa, a nurse at the hospital said. Two of the wounded died in Baidoa overnight while three others remained in a critical condition.

#### Iran to hold public funeral for 440 🚟 soldiers from the Iraqi war

TEHRAN (AFP) - Iran will hold public funeral . ceremonies in Tehran on Friday for 440 of its so diers who died in the 1980-88 war against trage though 119 of them have not been identified, a military official announced Monday. "The funeral procession will take place at the end of Friday prayers in front of Tehran University," said Genet 3 al Mir Feisal Bagerzadeh, in charge of search operations for the bodies of Iranian soldiers. He was quoted by Iranian radio as saying that the remains of some 10 to 12,000 Iranians "are still in Iraq." The two countries regularly exchange the bodies of former combatants, and more than 40,000 corpses. have been found since the end of the war that claimed some 300,000 Iranian lives.

## Iraqi opposition chief in Kuwait

DUBAI (AFP) — An Iraqi opposition group said its chief met Kuwait's emir on Monday to discuss the opposition tried to woo Arab states which Hakim called for "Arab solidarity with the Iraqi

## Iraq declares ceasefire in Car set on fire at verbal war with Egypt - | Arabic newspaper

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq's influential Babel newspaper on Monday said it had declared a ceasefire in its vitriolic war of words with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

The daily, run by eldest son of the Iraqi president Uday Saddam Hussein, said the move was designed to avoid the campaign's "exploitation by the American and Zionist enemies."

"Babel and the non-governmental weeklies believe President Mubarak has received the message and has decided to end its campaign from Tuesday," the newspaper told its readers.

The campaign followed remarks by Mubarak that he blamed Saddam Hussein for his people's continuing plight. His reproach was the latest in a series of bitter Egyptian

attacks on Iraq. "Our American and Zionist enemies have begun to exploit this press campaign to widen the gap between the Iraqi and Egyptian people," Babel said. calling on Mubarak to "learn history's lessons."

But prior to the ceasefire, Iraq's press launched its

"The Iraqis are suffering to

fourth day of vitriolic attacks Monday on Mubarak, accusing him of delaying an Arab summit at which Baghdad hoped to win strong backing. The ceasefire came as a

newspaper with close links to Qatar's foreign ministry on Monday urged Iraq and Egypt to end their conflict saying it "only serves the enemies of the Arab nation."

survive, to have milk and medicine. They are distanced from this war of words, as are the Egyptian people who demonstrated in the street their support for the Iraqis." Al-Watan said.

There were large demonstrations in Egypt in support of Baghdad during the fourday U.S. and British bombings of Iraq that ended December 30. At his first cabinet meeting

of the new year Saddam lashed out at unnamed Arab nations that were "traitors participating in the plot of aggression against Iraq," Iraq's official INA news agency said Sunday.

Ties between Egypt and Iraq were broken during the 1991 Gulf War by Baghdad. But 1998 saw a thaw which included a visit by lraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz to Cairo.

NEW YORK (AP) - A manager at a prominent Arabic newspaper says the business received harassing telephone calls before a car was driven inside the paper's printing facility and set afire.

The message, in Arabic. "was someone cursing, but there were no specifics, no nothing," said Yazid Mourani, president of Media Marketing Research.

Police said a 1992 Mitsubishi was driven through a steel gate at the Al Hayat facility in Queens on Friday afternoon and set on fire. It caused minor damage to the building, where newspapers are printed for New York City, but there were no

injuries and no arrests. In January 1997, letter bombs were sent to offices for the newspaper in Washington, in London and at the United Nations. Two people were injured when the bomb sent to the London office exploded. The other bombs were discovered before they detonated. The newspaper, owned by

a member of the Saudi royal family, is one of the largest and most influential Arabiclanguage papers in the world and is popular among expatriates in the West. Although it has run articles criticising Saddam Hussein and fundamentalism, its general news coverage is considered unbiased with moderate editorial positions.

A terrorism task force of local and federal law enforcement officials was investigating.

Newspaper officials who could comment further were not immediately available this morning.

efforts to overthrow President Saddam Hussein, as Baghdad has alienated. Ayatollah Mohammad Bager Al Hakim, leader of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), met Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah in Kuwait City, the group said in a statement received in Dubai. It said people to get rid of the dictatorship."

#### JORDAN TELEVISION Tel. 4773111-19 PROGRAMME TWO

	15:10 Children's French programme
	15:30Cartoon – Bananas in Pyjama
	16:00Doc - Life Choices
	16:30Ch. 2 links with Ch.
	17:10 Doc Mothers of the Wild
	18:15Omar Ben Abdul Aziz
	19:00Le Journa
1	19:15Words of Wisdom
	19:30News headlines
- 1	19:35Comedy - Step by Step
	20:00 Journey Across the Work
	of Islum
	20:30Drama - Tom Jones
	21:05 Doc. — You and Your Car
1	21:39UN Cut
	22:00News in English

#### PRAYER TIMES

23:10 .......Feature film - "Raven"

...Lonesome Dove

.....End of T.X.

	04:55	Fajr
	05:10	(Sunrise) Duha
	11:41	Dhuhr
	14:27	'Asr
	16:50	Maghreb
	18:12	·Isha
- 1		

#### **CHURCHES**

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh, Tel. 5920740 Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590 Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366 Anglican Church 4624853/4624811. St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751. **Amman International Church** Tel. 5865897

Congregation Tel. 5688404 The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 581 1295 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932 St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757 Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440

German-speaking Evangelical

Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138 Church of Presentation, Sweifieh Tel. 5920146 The Uniate Catholic Church Tel. 4624757 English-Language

Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190 Evangelical Free Church Tel. 1892679 The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052 Armenian

### WEATHER

American Orthodox

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Church Tel. 4771331

Church Tel. 4775261

Relative cold weather conditions will prevail skies partly cloudy, and winds southeasterly to southwesterly moderate, in Adaba. winds will be northerly moder-

..04/16 Amman \_10/23 Agaba . ..03/17 Jordan Valley .....

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 17, Aqaba 22 Humidity readings: Amman 29 per cent. Agaba 40 percent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following

Ajloun	03/11
 Jerash	07/18
Um Qays	06/17
Madaba	03/15
Petra	02/17
Dead Sea	12/24

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Yousef Rashid...

Dr. Jum'a Abu Dhiab...

AMMAN: \_4675485 Dr. Walid Al Masri.

\_4875792

4758848

Firas Pharmacy .....5661912 Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730 Mayadah Pharmacy ....5537004 Rukn Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

Dr. Lutfi Shibli..... (02)241789 Fou'ad Pharmacy .(02)275360 ZARQA:

Dr. Walid Halaseh.....(09)982799 Palestine Pharmacy..(09)983562

#### **EMERGENCIES**

Food Control Centre......4637111 Civil Defence Department 5661111 Civil Defence Immediate Rescue .....4630341 Civil Defence Emergency......199 Rescue Police.. 192, 4621111, 4637777 Fire Brigade......4617101 Blood Bank..... .4775121 Highway Police.....5343402 Traffic Police..... .4896390 Public Security Dept......4630321 Hotel Complaints.....5605800 Price Complaints.....5661176 Water & Sewerage Complaints 4897467 Amman Municipality Complaints ....4787111 Telephone Information (directory assistance) .... Overseas Calls ...0132

Central Amman Telephone Repairs

..5661101 Jordan Television ......4773111 ..4774111 Radio Jordan .... ...5680100 Water Authority .... J. Electricity Authority ...5815615 Electric Power Co......4636381 RJ Flight Information....44-53200 Queen Alia Intl. Airport .....44-53200

#### HOSPITALS AMMAN:

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery ..... ..5921199 The Islamic, Abdli ......5666131/7 Hussein Medical Centre...5856856 Luzmila ...4630195 Khalidi Maternity.... ...4644281/6 Akileh Maternity....... 16-12-141/2 Jabul Amman Maternity.....4642362 Malhas, J. Amman. ......4636140 Palestine, Shmeisani ......5607071 Shmeisani Hospital ......5607431 Jordan Hospital ..... \_5607550 University Hospital ......5353444 Al-Musher Hospital 5667227/9 Al-Ahli, Abdali ......5664164/6 Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4777101/3 Al-Bashir..... ...4775111/26 Army, Marka ......48916[1/15 Queen Alia Hospital......5157100 Arnal Hospital ......5607155 Al Amai Cancer Centre .. 5353000

Zarqa Govt. Hospital .(09)983323 Zaroa National Hospital.. (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital .....(09)986731

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR Al Hikma Modern Hospital

10:15

16:40

20:10

23:10

14:35

18:00

18:45

19:05

20:25

23:55

00:55

02:00

Airport) (RW)

Airport) (RW)

Airport) (RW)

Other Flights

TRBM: Princess Basma Hospital .(02)275555 Roman Catholic Hospital ....(02)272275 Al Nafees Hospital ...(02)7101372, (02)7103101 Rosary Sisters Hospital ...(02)7102831, (02)7102011 Speciality Hospital .....(02)7103100

AQABA: Princess Haya Hospital (03)2040111

#### FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

## ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights 09:50 \_Tehran, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

#### Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights ...Muscat, Dubai (RJ) ...... Doha, Bahrain (RJ)

...Beirut (ME)

..Tel Aviv (LY)

\_Amsterdam (KL)

...Bucharest (RO)

22:25 ...London, Damascus (BA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

09:30 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA)

11:10\_Aqaba (arriving at Marka

16:00. Aqaba (arriving at Marka

18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA)

22:50 Aqaba (arriving at Marka

...Cario (MS)

Lamaça(CY)

...Rome (AZ)

Kiev (6U)

Paris (AF)

10:50 ...... Berlin, Brussels (RJ) ......Cairo (RJ) 11:30 \_\_ ..........Vienna (add)(RJ) 17:30 Chicago, Arnsterdam (RJ) 12:00 .......Geneva, Paris (RJ) .....Vienna (add) (RI) London (RJ) 21:00 ....London, Frankfurt (RJ) ...Beirut (RJ) 12:30 ..Jeddah (add) (RJ) ...Jeddah (add) (RJ) 19:35 ..... 20:30 20:45 ... "Damascus (RJ) .-Aden (TY) 21:00 ....Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ) ...Istanbul (TK) 22:00 \_\_\_\_\_\_Jeddah (add) (RJ) ...Dubai, Damascus (EK)

> Other Flights Frankfurt (LH) 07:10 \_Istanbal (TK) \_Dubai (EK) 19.40 Berrut (ME) 20:00 \_Tel Aviv (LY) 21:10. \_Cairo (MS) 21:40 "Amsterdam (KL) 00:35 \_Bucharest (RO) 01:55 \_Rome (AZ) 03:00 \_\_

Royal Wings (RW) Flights 07:00 Aqaba (from Marke Airpon) (RW) 08:30...Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW) 16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marks Air port)(RW) 20:30 ... Aqaba (from QATA) (RW)

#### DEPARTURES

Mamsar deli White para - Mi Section 115 for lident, becausing the i 05:00 ......Aqaba (add) (RJ) he project is neing in 08:25 \_Amsterdam, New York (RJ) bad lastitute for Relie: Majali receiv AMMAN Petra - St \_\_\_Cairo (RJ) Frankfust (RJ) Minde: recent to a max ... Madrid (RJ) agened the study Peo-...Beirut (RI) Tillion of the Arab Par "Jeddah (RJ). Medicine Institution Par Ame for others the an i<sup>Bilta</sup>ji receiv MABA (Petra - Mir and delegation, of tou angher from other Eur ...Aden (TY) sdeniugical sheet in Ja the Three months a \_Kiev (6U) Adaptar tour percus मिल वह प्रिया १००१ १५ में हैं।

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and to mercome the er Talling Olive: Gar Sa the crisis in 1 id needs of gas crim imilar ges crisis. E Prepare Policies, plac warned egains; man to K found guilty of

AMMAN (J.T.) — In what seems to be a determined move to deal with the problem of illegal workers and unemployment rising unemployment among Jordanians, Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh announced Monday that illegal workers who have inled to rectify their status by the end of March will be forced to leave the country. Emerging from a meeting

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of the Higher Committee Unemployment, Tarawneh said non-Jordanian workers who are found lacking valid work and residency permits within three months will not be allowed to stay on and the concented authorities will ask them to leave Jordan.

We will not tolerate any disregard of the existing laws and at the same time we welcome non-Jordanian workers who abide by the law and are legally employed. We secure for ution mar them full rights," said the prime minister.

Tarawneh said to date only 121,000 non-Jordanian workers have complied with the labour law, according to figures supplied by the ministers of labour and

No accurate figures of guest workers are available but some estimates put their numbers at around one million at a time when Jordan faces up to 25 per cent unemployment among its workforce.

'We will not tolerate any disregard of the existing laws'

Public Security Department said late last month that scores of illegal foreign workers are being

— Tarawneh

deported almost daily. According to the prime minister a large number of guest workers are not willing to rectify their status and have not acquired work and residency permits.

According to government officials, Egyptian nationals make up almost half of the number of guest workers in Jordan. An agreement reached by the Egyptian and Jordanian governments dictates procedures which require an Egyptian to obtain work permit before arriving in the King-

The prime minister said the committee on unemployment has put forth a number of suggestions such as creating a fund for the unemployed, but he did not say if any decision was taken in this regard.

Referring to an earlier proposal to reintroduce compulsory national service in either the military or civic institutions, the prime minister said the proposal has been studied in conjunction with the Jordan Armed Forces Command and the Ministry of Administrative Development. He said the committee will discuss the draft project in the

across the country considering how hard the current recession has hit the country," said Borini. The engineering sector in

Jordan suffers from both rampant joblessness and disguised unemployment. "The new taxes will lead

to further complication of the engineers' problems," said Borini, owner of a consulting engineering office.

The local market requires only 3,000 engineers while there are around 5,000 working in consulting offices across the country, he said.

officials declined to comment on the issue. "The 1994 law forced

Customs Department

Engineers criticise sales tax,

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN - The Jordan-

ian Consulting Engineer-

ing Bureau on Monday

criticised the government's

decision to charge its

members sales tax and

described it as the straw

that broke the camel's

"The new tax law will

force many consulting

engineers offices to close

down or minimise their

operation," said Khalid

Borini, chairman of the

In 1994, the government

passed a law obliging engi-

neering consulting offices

to pay a tax of 10 per cent

of its sales if operations exceed JD100,000 annual-

ly. In late 1998, the Coun-

cil of Ministers made an

amendment to the 1994

law to demand offices sell-

ing more than JD25,000

annually to pay the tax as

"The new amendment is

a big burden on offices

Engineering Bureau.

Consulting

back.

Jordanian

well.

predict closure of 1,000 offices

around 200 offices to suspend their work," Borini said. "The current amendment will lead to the closure of 1,000 offices at least."

There are around 12,000 offices currently operating in the Kingdom.

"If the government insists on its decision, many engineers will join the long list of their unemployed colleagues, when offices will be forced to dismiss them," he added.

According to Borini, the Customs Department would receive around JD500,000 a year from the sales tax which is insignificant in comparison to the damage will inflict on people employed in this sec-

"At the end of the day, the common citizen, with limited income, will pay the tax not the offices," he

The bureau called on the government to reconsider its decision and return to the 1994 law.

"If the government insists on charging offices, we suggest that the tax be directly enforced on those applying for a building licence.

added the engineer.

scheduled to hold a gener-

al assembly meeting at the

end of this month to dis-

cuss the issue and possible

alternatives to combat the

"The Pharmacists Association's decision represents all professional associations in the country," said Basem The Jordan Consulting Engineering Bureau is

of the Arab street.

By Mohammad

Ben Hussein

AMMAN — The Jordan

Pharmacists Association is

approval to send a shipment

of pharmaceutical products

to Iraq in defiance of the

U.N. economic sanctions

imposed on that country,

Abdul Rahim Issa, head of

the association said Monday.

The association, whose

members own 1,600 phar-

macies and 12 pharmaceuti-

cal factories, was scheduled

to send the first shipment on

Monday but the association

was surprised by the govern-

ment's delay in giving the

The products, scheduled

to be exported to Iraq, were

originally designated for the

Jordanian markets, which

requires the association to

obtain a special permission

from the Ministry of Indus-

try and Trade and the Inte-

rior Ministry to export them

The Council of Presidents

of the Union of Professional

Associations has giving the

thumbs-up to the Jordan

Pharmacists Association in

its decision and considered it

as a reflection of the desire

to Iraq," said Issa.

awaiting

green light.

government

Dajani the current chairman of the associations council of presidents.

awaits government approval

Jordanian medical aid to Iraq

"The association will not wait for approval from the United Nations and if [U.N. inspectors will not allow us in], the trucks will turn back," said Issa.

Issa said the association had asked all drug stores. factories and medical equipment stores in Jordan to contribute to the shipment.

United Nations sanctions imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait ban it from importing or exporting most goods.

Humanitarian items such as food and medicine are allowed in, but every sold or donated goods must be approved by the U.N. sanctions monitoring committee. The committee's job is to ensure that any exports to Iraq cannot be used in its weapons industries.

Issa said the association plans to sell the drugs in Iraq at low prices and is in contact with the Iraqi side to inform them about their decision.

However, Iraqi embassy officials in Amman said they had not been contacted by the union

Issa urged other business associations in Jordan and in Arab countries to defy the

The associations last

American and British drugs. medical equipment and other goods to protest the air strikes on Iraq from Dec. 16 to Dec. 19.

Some association members have scorned the boycott decision and described it as impractical since the Jordanian market cannot manage without American and British products. Such a boycott was earlier launched but

failed for the same reason. The 13-member council on Sunday formed a special committee to follow up the latest development in the donations campaign initiated by the associations to help the Iraqi people. The committee is comprised of Hosni Abu Gheida, head of the 38,000 members Engineers Association and Abdul Rahim Issa head of the Pharmacists Association.

Iraq earlier refused to take humanitarian aid from any party and called on lifting the sanctions instead.

The 100,000- member Professional Associations, known for their pro-Iraqi and anti-Israeli activism are currently in contact with different Arab professional associations and hope to hold a general meeting of the Arab Professional Associations.

The meeting is scheduled to be held either in Jordan or

## Agriculture ministry explores ways to deal with drought conditions

potential for drought next summer dominated a meeting Monday of the Ministry of Agriculture's Planning Committee, now concerned that this winter's lack of rainfall may bear negatively on the agricultural sector.

The meeting chaired, by Minister of Agriculture Mijhem Khreisha, discussed ways to reduce the effects on the public and boost coordination among the various concerned govemment-departments and ministries in this respect.

ry plans to specialised contact memational agencies with experience in coping with drought conditions to help lordan overcome the probems that may arise from a drought, according to a statement released follow-

The committee also discussed the water ministry's

decision to restrict the amount of water which farmers consume from artesian wells and its proposal that the farmers pay the cost of extra water used on their farms if consumption exceeds the 50,000 cubic

metres level allowed them

every year. The ministry said that a technical committee of specialists from the ministry and other concerned departments has been formed to conduct a comprehensive and, integrated study, on, the , effects of drought and the wells for irrigation. The committee will submit practical recommendations to deal with an emergency

situation. Minister of Water and Energy Hani Mulki told Parliament at a regular session Sunday that the government has drawn up a

plan to face problems that

could arise in connection with water shortages next

The plan entails controlling the use of water from 1,654 artesian well-owners as part of a national effort to combat illegal water

The Water Authority last week referred 1,500 cases to court involving residents who allegedly illegally received water either by tampering with or damaging water meters.

The planning committee at the Ministry of Agriculture also reviewed the country's preparations for Arbor Day ceremonies to

be held starting January 15. The ministry said it plans to involve all public and private sector institutions in tree planting around the country supplying thousands of tree saplings from

## Deputies expected to lift immunity of Deputy Abbadi

By Tareq Momani

AMMAN - The Legal Committee of the Lower House of Parliament is likely to recommend that the House lift the immunity of Deputy Ahmad Owedi Abbadi so that he can be questioned in connection with two cases of alleged sexual assault, parliamentarians said Sunday.

However, lifting immunity cannot be used for the purpose of detention, said Deputy Mahmoud Kharabsheh, rapporteur of the Legal Committee, currently examining the cases referred to it by the House's Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali.

Emerging from the committee meeting, chaired by Deputy Ghaleb Zu'bi, Kharabsheh said committee members studied the documents pertaining to the two cases and the charges levelled against who has been accused of "committing rape" and "damaging marital bonds.

According to Kharabsheh, the committee's opinion is not unified.

According to House regulations, cases concerning the immunity of deputies are referred to the legal committee for review. The committee issues recommendations to the House

(Tel. 5699141/2).

within a two-week period of time.

The Jordanian Constitution states that senators and deputies shall not be subject to court prosecution while Parliament is in session unless an absolute majority of the Lower House finds enough evidence to allow prosecution.

Abbadi has denied the allegations levelled against him, and the husband of the woman who filed one of the sexual assault cases against the deputy has dropped charges. But the legal committee says the husband's decision to drop charges does not mean that the case is dropped at the Lower House.

Following the committee's meetings on Monday, Kharabsheh said committee members were of the opinion that the Parliament should facilitate procefor questioning dures Abbadi but not for detaining him because, he said, the legal committee cannot act on behalf of the judicia-

Kharabsheh said the committee decided the postpone discussion of the issue until next Saturday when it is expected to take a decision, noting that the Parliament is keen to facilitate the work of the judicial system.

## Jordan seeks increased oil purchases from Iraq

By Hassan Hafidh Reuters

BAGHDAD — Jordan, dependent on Iraq for its oil needs, wants to increase its oil purchases from Baghdad by three per cent in 1999, visiting Jordanian energy undersecretary Ahmad Basheer said Monday.

"The increase that we are asking for is an estimated rise of three per cent in Jordan's oil consumption in 1999," Basheer told Reuters.

He said Jordan's needs of refined products would be one million topnes and the rest would be crude oil. Last year's agreement between Amman and Baghdad was for 4.8 million tonnes of crude oil and by-products.

Basheer declined to give any details of the terms of

the agreement. In the past Iraq has supplied some of the oil at market prices and the rest at concessionary rates, all paid for with Jordanian food and medical exports.

Iraq has not yet commented on Basheer's visit. Jordanian Energy Minisiter Hani Mulki had been scheduled to arrive in Baghdad on Sunday to sign the agreement with Iraq but Basheer said his visit was called off because of a crisis over liquified gas shortages in

Basheer said he would sign the accord with fraqi officials in two days and Mulki would visit Bagh-

dad in the near future. Since the 1991 Gulf War over Kuwait - in which Amman sympathised with Baghdad — Iraq has been exporting around 75,000

barrels of oil a day to Jor-

In previous years, when oil prices were higher, Iraq got in return around \$300 million to \$350 million worth of food and medieine from Jordanian firms. medical Food and imports are not covered by the sweeping U.N. sanctions imposed for Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait

to continue. The U.N. also allows Baghdad separately to sell limited quantities of crude to buy food and medicines

and oil supplies to Jordan

have been quietly allowed

for Iraqis. Talks on the oil supplies appeared to be going ahead despite political tension between Iraq and Jordan over last month's U.S.-led air strikes against

## News in brief

## Computerised passports to be issued

AMMAN (Petra) - The Civil Registration and Passport Department will issue new computerised passports later this year, meeting international specifications, the Department's Director General Awni Yarvas said. Yarvas added that the new specifications will make it easier for the computer to process passports within a minute without causing

#### passengers any delay at crossing points and airports. Mamsar delivers Ramadan food packages

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Social Development Mohammad Kheir Mamsar Monday distributed 115 food packages to poor families in Al Qaisieh neighbourhood in Abdoun, heralding the launch of a JD80,000 project, entitled "Fast-Breaking" project. The project is being implemented by the ministry in cooperation with the U.S. Holy Land Institute for Relief and Development.

## Majali receives thanks from Iraq's Hammadi

AMMAN (Petra) - Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Abdul Hadi Majali Monday received a message from his Iraqi counterpart Sa'doun Hammadi, in which he expressed the Iraqi Peoples Assembly's satisfaction with the results of the emergency session of the Arab Parliamentary Union (APU), held here late last month. Hammadi toted the Jordanian Parliament's contribution to the adoption by the APU of a decision calling for lifting the embargo on Iraq.

## Biltaji receives delegation

AQABA (Petra) — Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Aqel Biltaji Monday received two delegations of tour operators. One 130 member delegation from Belgium and another from other European countries were briefed on the historical importance of archeological sites in Jordan. The Belgian delegation will visit Petra. Wadi Rum and Aqaba. Three months ago, a group of European tour operators signed contracts with lordanian tour operators to organise group tours to the Kingdom. Under the contract, a total of 140 tourists will visit Jordan every week for one year.

## Consumer society praises government

AMMAN (Petra) — The National Society for Consumer Protection (NSCP) Monday landed efforts by the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources and other parties concerned to overcome the shortage of butane gas in the Kingdom, NSCP President Mohammad Obeidat said. In a statement to Petra, Obeidat said the ministry's efforts addressed this crisis in record time. Obeidat called on citizens to buy only their immedian diate needs of gas cylinders, and not to stockpile them in order to avoid the recurrence and from View of a similar gas crisis, and requested the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company (JPRC) to prepare policies, plans and programmes to ensure gas reserves for six months. Obeidat warned against manipulating gas cylinder weights and prices, saying that anyone who is found guilty of doing so will be referred to court.

## what's going on

 "The Rock" at Books@Café, Jabal Amman at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 4650457).

EXHIBITIONS

Photo exhibition at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Jan. Exhibition of ceramics, sculpture, and abstract (plastic) art by Jordanian, Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese, and Sudanese artists at

Hammourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until Exhibition of Nabataean silver jewelry at the Jordan Design and Trade Cenre, off Wadi Saqra Street, until Jan. 15

Art Gallery, Um Uthaina (Tel. 5526932), until Feb. 1. The Tenth Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2, until

"The Warm Winter" - works by several artists at Orfali

## Al Bashir Hospital gets ready for five-year expansion project Tarawneh hears patient complaints

Minister Fayez Tarawneh said Monday the government will modernise and expand the services of Al Bashir Hosptial in Amman in order to enable it to deal with the ever-increasing demand and improve medical services of the hospital's various departments.

AMMAN (Petra) - Prime

Speaking during a visit to the hospital, the prime minister said the Council of ministers recently gave its consent to expand the hospital, adding that work on the scheme, which takes five years, will start by the middle of this year.

The prime minister, who toured the different sections of the hospital, emphasised the government's keenness to reduce the pressure on the hospital's sections and guarantee a high standard of service to the public.

Tarawneh attended a briefing by hospital director Mahmoud Awad, who noted that in addition to providing primary health care services, Al Bashir hospital serves as a training centre for students of medicine and nursing as well as the training of doctors preparing to sit the Jordan Medical Board examina-

According to Awad, Al Bashir receives nearly 12,000 outpatients on a daily basis, and in 1997 the hospital admitted 60,000 patients for treatment. In the same year, he said the hospital provided medical service to 500,000 outpatients and dealt with 350,000 first aid and emergency cases according to Awad.

He told the prime minister that Al Bashir hospital conducts nearly 22,000 surgical operations annually in its 24 operation the-

Minister of Health Na'el Ailouni outlined the main problems and difficulties facing the hospital, noting that different sections are in need of constant maintenance. He pointed out that doctors require higher pay to be on a par with doctors in the private sector and others in other government

-run hospitals. Ajlouni said one way to ease pressure lies in building new hospitals and cooperating with private sector hospitals to offer medical

services. But he added that work is under way for the construction of the Hamzeh Hospital which should help ease

pressure on Al Bashir. Hamzeh Hospital will have a cooperation agreement with Al Amal Cancer Cen-

In touring the hospital's wards, the prime minister met patients who talked about the medical services and heard their complaints.

Following the tour, the prime minister told Jordan Television that Al Bashir Hospital, a complex housing a cluster of smaller facilities, is one of the oldest hospitals in the Kingdom that serves not only Amman residents, but also patients referred to it from other parts of the Kingdom

He said the hospital is facing heavy pressure and the staff are overburdened with work. Tarawneh said he had learnt from the patients a number of complaints such as having to wait up to two to three months for necessary operations, or even X-rays due to the congestion created by thousands of people seeking medical attention each

The prime minister said the government plans to conclude agreements with private sector hospitals to handle part of the burden facing Al Bashir.

**NEWS IN BRIEF** 

French interior minister back to work, four months after coma

PARIS (AP) - His recovery now complete, French Interior Minister Jean-Pierre Chevenement returned to work Monday, four months after falling into a life-

threatening coma during surgery. Government ministers, including Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, gathered

early monday to welcome him back at a breakfast at the interior Ministry. "I'm as well as I possibly could be," said Chevenement. "I can tell you that my red

cells have made it to the meeting I fixed for them." The minister's heart stopped for nearly an hour Sept 2 after he suffered an allergic reaction to curare, a mascle relaxant, just before gall bladder surgery. He spent

eight days in a coma. Chevenement, 59, recently joken

that he had no choice but to awake from the coma-

"God didn't want me. but the devil didn't either, so F

came back, he said. A key figure in Socialist Prince

Minister Lionel Jospin's cabinet, Chevenement has held several ministry portfolios in previous governments. including industry, education and defence.

resigned as defence minister in 1991 to protest France's involvement with the U.S.-led alliance in the

Gulf War against Iraq. As interior minister, he responsible for the nation's police and security forces

'North Korea deploys

ballistic missiles'

TOKYO (AFP) — North Korea has deployed Rodong-

## 16 killed in Pakistan mosque massacre

MULTAN, Pakistan (AFP) ists" to task. - Gunmen massacred at least 16 people Monday when they burst into a temple just after dawn prayers and opened fire in one of the worst Muslim sectarian

attacks, officials said. Eight people from the Shiite Muslim mosque died instantly while others died on the way to hospital. where 13 others were reported to be in critical condition.

Pakistan has seen mounting tension between extremist groups of the minority Shiite community and the majority Sunnis.

The latest attack was immediately condemned by the government.

Officials said assailants took part in the killings in Karamdad Koreshi, 50 kilometres west of the Punjab city of Multan.

The victims included the principal of a Shiite school. Shops closed as the killings triggered demonstrations in towns in Punjab province where protesters immediate demanded action.

Witnesses said even before the bodies had been removed from the mosque students blocked traffic with burning tyres.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif vowed his govern-

Stressing that Muslims could not imagine the "devilish act of shedding the blood of innocent people during the holy month of Ramadan," he said: "Antistate elements are carrying out these nefarious acts to create instability in the country."

The attack came less than 24 hours after Sharif narrowly escaped an assassination bid, when a bomb exploded on a road he had been due to travel along.

The bomb was planted under a bridge close to his family farm near Lahore. about 200 kilometres north-

east of Multan. The bomb killed three

Officials said two men with Kalashnikov rifles entered the mosque and sprayed worshippers with bullets as they listened to a

sermon after dawn prayers. Another kept watch at the gate while a fourth drove the attackers away after the

shooting, they said. Residents said the mosque was crowded for Ramadan prayers and the attack triggered immediate panic.

Sources said at least 12

people with serious injuries were admitted to hospitals in Multan and the nearby city of Muzaffaragarh.

Religious vendettas between militants of the after Monday's massacre.

majority Sunni and the minority Shiite communities have claimed several hundred lives in the past two years.

Monday's killings came only two weeks after a speanti-terrorism court sentenced to death 14 people from Shiite and Sunni extremist groups for sectarian murders.

The convicts included eight Sunnis accused of killing Iranian diplomat Muhammad Ali Rahimi and seven employees in an attack on Iranian cultural centre in Multan in February 1997.

Six others were Shiite extremists accused of killing 22 Sunni Muslims in an attack on a mosque in September 1996.

Shiites form about 20 per cent of the 140 million population in Pakistan.

The country has been plagued by sectarian violence blamed on rivalry between the extremist Sunni group Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and their Shiite counterparts, Sipah-i-Muhammad (SMP).

In January 1997, 26 people including SSP chief Ziaur Rehman Farooqi were killed when a bomb exploded in a court in Lahore.

A police official said security had been tightened



Opposition party leader of the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) Chee Soon Juan speaks to reporters after leaving the subordinate court. Chee pleaded not guilty to giving a political talk without an official permit, and declared outside the court that he will stage another illegal rally (AFP photo)

## Singapore opposition politician to defy police

SINGAPORE (R) — A enter a plea. Freedom of Singapore opposition politician pleaded not guilty Monday to a charge of making a speech without a permit and vowed to continue speaking even if he is detained without trial under the Internal Security Act (ISA).

Chee Soon Juan, leader of small opposition Singapore Democratic Party, told Reuters he would not back away from giving public speeches because he needed to "bypass the state media" and "find a different way to communicate with the peo-

Chee appeared in court to be charged with giving a public speech on Dec. 29 without the permit the law requires all public speakers to obtain.

Police said at the time Chee refused to accept a written warning that he was about to make a speech without a permit and ignored a verbal warning not to go ahead.

He pleaded not guilty to the charge which carries a maximum penalty of a fine of up to Singapore \$5,000 (\$3,000). "I cannot be guilty of some-

thing that the constitution of my country guarantees," he not live in fear," junior Law told the court when asked to

speech is enshrined Singapore's constitution.

Chee's case will go to trial Speaking to reporters after-wards. Chee said it was "very possible" he would be arrested under the ISA.

"I want to remind the govemment that they cannot continue to arbitrarily arrest citizens of Singapore." he said.

"If they so decide to use the Internal Security Act on me then there is nothing we can do. But I want to warn them also not to underestimate the will of the Singapore people."

The ISA allows the detention of anyone deemed a threat to national security without trial for renewable two-year periods.

There was no immediate comment from the Singapore government, which says the ISA remains relevant to deal with racial and religious extremism, international terrorism, espionage and subver-

sion. "I think if you look at it not in a political partisan way, you will see that Singaporeans do and Home Affairs minister Ho Peng Kee told parliament in May 1997 while rejecting opposition charges that the helped Singaporeans from expressing

"But do we use it freely, wantonly? We don't," he said of the ISA. "But as a law. I think it ought to remain because it will be a good measure to fall back on if the need arises."

The last time Singapore arrested anyone under the ISA was in the late 1980s when 22 people were arrested for being involved in an alleged Marxist conspiracy against the government

Chee plans to give another public speech Tuesday at the heart of the business district.

Chee said he would be pressing for the government to guarantee and give Singaporeans the right to be able to peacefully assemble, associate and speak freely".

Chee's party has no representation in parliament after its two members lost their seats in the last general elections held in January 1997. when the People's Action Party (PAP) won 81 out of the 83 elected seats.

1 medium-range ballistic missiles on an "operational basis." Kyodo News agency said Monday, quoting a defence agency official. The defence agency reached the conclusion based on pictures taken by U.S. reconnaissance satellites, the unnamed official was quoted by the Japanese agency as saying. North Korea test-fired a Rodong-1 missile into the Sea of Japan in May 1993. The missile with a range of 1,300 kilometres is based on the former Soviet Union's Scud-C missile. A defence agency spokesman declined to confirm the report. Pyongyang launched a rocket over Japanese, territory on Aug. 31 in order to put a satellite into orbit. But Tokyo insists it was almost certainly a large data. Taepo-dong ballistic missile test. Tensions have mounted between the two countries as a U.S. official said last week North Korea was preparing for a second Taepo-dong missile test launch by the end of this year. News reports said last month that North Korea was: constructing three underground sites for a ballistic missile launch.

#### 13,000 homeless in China quake area

BEIJING (AFP) - An earthquake that hit remote southwestern China at the weekend caused little damage but raised fears among the 13,000 people homeless after a previous temblor, officials said Monday. "The quake Sunday was not so serious. It left two people injured and killed two cows and six sheep," said Mao Jingui, deputy director of the Ninglang Civil Affairs Bureau in southwestern Yunnan province. "But we still have the earthquake alarm in place, and between 12,000 and 13,000 people are still homeless and living in tents from the November earthquake," he said by telephone. Sunday's quake; measuring 5.0 on the Richter scale, struck in the same location as a deadly double quake on Nov. 19 which killed five people and left 25,000 homeless. The area is currently the focus of a concentrated area of seismic activity which started in August and has caused more than 1,290 tremors measuring 2.0 or more on the Richter scale. The region has received 3.3 million yuan (\$401,000) in relief donations following the

#### Viagra maker urges Hong Kongers to steer clear of black market

HONG KONG (AFP) - The makers of the male antiimpotency drug Viagra Monday urged people in Hong Kong to steer clear of black-market versions of the medicine before it is officially approved for sale here. Recently we have been getting a lot of calls from people thinking that our drug has been approved and asking us where they can purchase it," a spokes-woman for Pfizer Corp. here told AFP. "It is not approved, and what they are getting on the black market is not approved by Pfizer and we cannot guarantee what they are getting." The Pharmacy and Poisons Board has given the go-ahead to import Viagra, but its sale still needs to be approved by the government of Hong Kong, where about 200,000 men are believed to be impotent. The Pfizer spokeswoman denied government pressure was behind the company's appeal. Hong Kong airport customs officers seized more than 9.200 Viagra tablets in the last six months of 1998. A 29-year-old Taiwanese man was arrested in November after arriving from Taipei with 180 Viagra tablets. In China, where Viagra is also still illegal, it is reported to be freely available particularly in neighbouring Guangdong province, where it can cost as much as 400 Hong Kong dollars (\$52) a tablet.

#### Three people killed in artillery shell blast

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) - Three people were killed and another was seriously injured when a war-era artillery shell went off as they tried to extract the explosives, police said Monday. The victims of Saturday's explosion ran a scrap iron shop in the northern province of Thanh Hoa and bought the shell from collectors, they said. Explosives are often used for limestone excavation or in dynamite fishing in the province, 160 kilometres south of Hanoi. Casualties from war-era ordnance are reported virtually every week in Vietnam as farmers seek scrap iron to make

#### Aged burglar dies while breaking into apartment

WEINFELDEN. Switzerland (AP) — A 70-year-old burglar collapsed and died in an apartment he had broken into, Swiss police said Monday. The man used a master key to get into the apartment. The cause of his death has not been confirmed, police said. The body was discovered by the owner of the apartment. also an elderly man, Sunday afternoon. Police said the burglar, who has not been named, had a previous conviction for a similar offence.

## Embattled press aide focus of feud in British cabinet

LONDON (AFP) — The political spin doctor at the centre of the row that forced amid intense speculation that he would soon be out of

The fate of Charlie Whelan is seen as an indicator of a long-running feud between Prime Minister Tony Blair and his Chancellor Gordon Brown. the man he beat to win the leadership of the Labour party in 1994.

Whelan is Brown's press aide, and is widely blamed — despite his denials — for a leak that led to the resignation of Blair confident Peter Mandelson as trade and industry secretary.

The story, that discredited junior treasury minister Geoffrey Robinson had lent 373,000 pounds (\$625,000) to Mandelson at preferential rate, also cost Robinson his

Brown is said to be pribitter vately Mandelson, then Labour's public relations supremo. switched sides to back Blair for the party leadership in

Nations' planned withdrawal

of peace observers and sus-

pension of flights from

Angola's war zones threaten

to worsen the plight of thou-

sands facing starvation and

disease, aid workers said

The U.N. Observer Mission

in Angola said Sunday it was

suspending flights to

Huambo after a second of its

planes was shot down

Saturday near the central city.

the scene of fierce fighting

between government troops

The downing of the C-130

transport plane with eight

people aboard led Issa Diallo.

the U.N. head in Angola, to

express doubts about the

future of the world body's

peace mission as the coun-

try's 1994 peace accord

unravels and civil war

"I think that the security

council and the secretary-

general have been thinking

about this for some time and

and UNITA rebels.

Monday

resumes.

New grist was added to the mill with publication two British government Monday in the British press ministers to resign was back of a memo Mandelson without being seen to lean behind his desk Monday wrote to Brown advising on Brown. him against standing against

Blair. Whelan has until now mostly been able to stay out of the public spotlight, but was met by a posse of reporters when he returned to his London home late Sunday after spending Christmas in the Scottish highlands.

Asked if he was going to resign, he said: "You will know in the morning."

Downing Street refused to be drawn into the speculation on Whelan's future. A spokesman insisted it was "a matter for the chancel-

Yet however much Blair's office tries to steer clear of damaging publicity about a rift in the cabinet, a number of ministers are said to be calling for Whelan's resignation.

That at least is partly because of Whelan's ebullient style which includes briefings to favoured jour-

U.N. withdrawal to deepen

when a decision will be

taken. I think it will be very

He said he had ordered an

immediate halt to all flights to

Huambo and the withdrawal

of U.N. observers from con-

A humanitarian worker said

the U.N.'s decision placed

Huambo's population of at

least 150,000 and a further

100.000 refugees in the city

"If the air situation is bro-

ken, it means that increasing-

ly in the next weeks or

months... the whole popula-

tion will be vulnerable." the

In Kuito, near Huambo, the

situation remains dire, aid

workers said. The govern-

ment-held town is besieged

by rebels of UNITA, the

National Union for the Total

The Angolan Armed Forces

said at the weekend it had

reopened Kuito's airport,

offering a glimmer of hope

Independence of Angola.

worker told Reuters.

soon," Diallo said Sunday.

Angolans' suffering

at risk.

LUANDA (R) — The United we will come to the point

Whelan's voluntary resignation would suit Blair, who would be free of his pertrouble-making ceived

broke the Robinson loan story and has consistently denied Whelan was its source, reported Monday that he was ready to quit.

Friends of his apparently told the paper he would resign as soon as he had another job to go to. because he was dismayed at being the centre of so much press attention.

The Financial Times, too, said he was fed up with the personal attacks and had told friends he was ready to "walk out" of his job. The 1994 Mandelson

memo, written four days after the death of previous Labour leader John Smith, warned Brown, who is Scottish, that he lacked the appeal in southern England which Blair enjoyed.

Mandelson praised Brown for his political acumen, but said any attempt to stand against Blair without a guarantee of winning would hugely damage the party.

that food supplies could be

flown to the beleaguered

expressed fears that the

renewed civil war could lead

to a similar situation as that in

1993 and 1994, when UNITA

forces besieged government

towns for extended periods,

leading to mass starvation

"If we end up the same as

then, with totally besieged

cities, then we will be moving

to a catastrophe." A special

Annan arrived in Luanda on

Monday for consultations

with the government and the

The visit follows the shoot-

ing down of two U.N. char-

tered C-130 aircraft within

eight days. Attempts to secure

cooperation from the govern-

ment and UNITA have so far

failed to result in search and

rescue missions for either

plane, although the govern-

ment has pledged to help.

Kofi

representative of

Secretary-General

U.N. mission.

the aid worker

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But

and disease.

## Khmer Rouge warns against trying to seize comrades

PAILIN, Cambodia (R) — Comrades of two former Khmer the possibility of setting up a tri-Rouge leaders blamed for Cambodia's "killing fields" signalled Monday they would resist any attempt to abduct the pair from their remote haven.

The deputy governor of the former Khmer Rouge stronghold of Pailin, which Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea have returned to after a visit to the capital Phnom Penh, made it clear that the pair's old brothers in arms would protect them.

Asked if he feared an attempt would be made to snatch the two men from Pailin and put them on trial for the Khmer Rouge's 1970s reign of terror, deputy governor leng Vuth said: "I don't think the Americans would do that If Americans were killed it would impact on the credibility of the U.S. presi-

No country has indicated an intention to use force to seize the two men, but Khmer Rouge expert Nate Thayer said the former guerrillas were very worried by such a prospect.

"Everyone there is terrified about the prospect of being brought before an international tribunal," said Thayer, who writes for the Far Eastern Economic Review and has close contacts with defectors in Pailin. "Their military force is limit-

ed but they would fight against it." Washington has been vocal in calling for Khmer Rouge leaders to be brought to account. Experts hired by the United

Nations have been looking at bunal along the lines of those for Rwanda and Bosnia and are due to report at the end of the month.

Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea — architects of the Khmer Rouge's 1975-79 agrarian revolution in which almost two million people died — quit the almost-defunct rebel movement last month and, in a visit to the capital, were feted by Premier Hun Sen.

Their VIP treatment, including a holiday at a beach resort. angered many survivors of the killing fields who want them tried. But the government allowed them Sunday to return

Prime Minister Hun Sen has said he supports a trial but this is up to the courts, not him, to аптапде. The government said that

since no warrant existed for their arrest, they were free to travel wherever they wanted. Political analysts say it would

be difficult now to bring the two back from Pailin which, though nominally controlled by the government, is led by leng Sary, another Khmer Rouge leader who received a royal amnesty after his 1996 defection.

Ieng Vuth - who is Ieng Sary's son - said Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea would remain based in Pailin but, according to government policy, were free to travel anywhere in Cambodia.

"Everyone is aware that the

priority for Cambodia at the moment is national reconcilia-

tion," he said. leng Vuth said the two men had returned to the town near Cambodia's border with Thailand Sunday after six days spent visiting Phnom Penh and other government-controlled

He said they left Pailin Monday morning to visit relatives in the adjoining northwestem province of Battambang.

"They want to travel around as ordinary people to see how people react to them. in general they have been welcomed by everyone they meet," he said. "Reports about people shouting and cursing at them are untrue." Many Cambodians interviewed by Reuters in the past week have expressed disgust at the government's red-carpet treatment of the men but said they felt powerless to influence their politicians.

However, the frustration boiled over for one man on Saturday who hurled abuse at the two as they left their Phnom Penh hotel. He blamed them for the deaths of 60 of his family.

Asked about relatives of those who died under the Khmer Rouge and who want to see the group's leaders tried, Ieng Vuth replied: "We don't want a trial to happen, but we understand how the relatives feel. If they want to make a case, no one can

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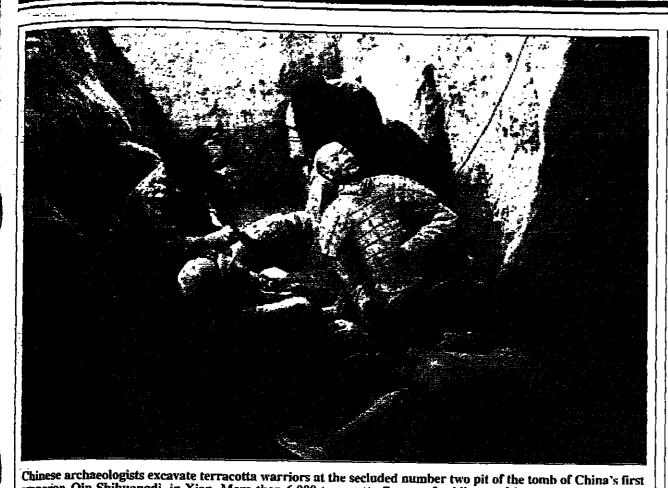
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## emperor, Qin Shihuangdi, in Xian. More than 6,000 terracotta figures of soldiers and horses have been excavated since the tomb was first uncovered in 1974. Xian, the capital of Shaanxi province in central China, was the capital (221-206 B.C.) of the Qin dynasty (Reuters photo)

## Supreme Court orders delay of 1st Philippine execution in 23 years

- lust three hours before a Supreme Court said "the convicted rapist was to be put to death Monday, the Supreme Court ordered a six-month delay in the Philippines' first execution in 23 years.

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house painter convicted of repeatedly raping his then 10-year-old stepdaughter, had been scheduled to die by lethal injection.

He was waiting by a prison death chamber for his execution when he was told of the court's ruling and wept with joy, a prison

spokesman said. About 100 anti-death penalty activists cheered outside the prison as a nearby church bell pealed.

President Joseph Estrada expressed dismay, calling it a "sad day for law enforcement and the rule of law." In recent weeks, several lawmakers had expressed doubts whether capital punishment would deter crime and sought a congressional review of the law that

restored the death penalty in

merest chance that the Congress might reconsider" the law required that Echegaray, 38, be granted a postponement.

This is definitely a victo-Leo Echegaray, a poor ry, a significant first step in abolishing the death penalty in this country," said Echegaray's Theodore Te.

Estrada, who has pledged to solve the country's serious crime problems, said the court overstepped its role of enforcing existing laws and promised to veto any new law repealing the death penalty.

Echegaray's stepdaughter, now 15, said she was disappointed that many people. including church officials, sympathised

"They don't understand what's happening to me now and what I'm feeling," the sobbing stepdaughter told reporters.

Echegaray, who was convicted in 1994, is the first among more than 800 death-row inmates to be graph of his 12-year-old

MANILA, Philippines (AP) In its 8-5 ruling, the scheduled for execution. More than 450 of those on death row were convicted of rape, including 159 who abused their own children or

other relatives. Other death row prisoners shouted Echegaray's name in a deafening chant as he returned Monday to his cell, the prison chaplain said.

Officials at his prison in Muntinlupa, a Manila suburb, had set up barbed wire roadblocks and deployed extra military and police guards to hold back large numbers of reporters and anti-death penalty the activists.

scheduled Echegaray's execution set off a debate among many Filipinos over the death penalty. Several Manila radio stations opened their telephone lines so listeners could express

Pro-death penalty activists who also railied outside the prison condemned the court's ruling.

They're siding with the criminals," said Eduardo Chan as he waved a photo-

daughter, who was gangraped and killed in 1995. "They should have executed him so that others will have fear in their hearts." President Joseph Estrada earlier turned down appeals from the Vatican, the Union and European Canada that the Philippines not resume capital punishment, saying he was obliged

to follow the law. Between 1924 and 1976. the Philippines executed 84 people. In 1987, a new constitution abolished the death penalty but gave Congress the option of restoring it for "heinous" crimes such as murder, kidnapping, rape and drug trafficking.

Legislators, alarmed by a rise in crime, brought back capital punishment in January 1994.

Roman Catholic bishops

and other civic groups opposing the death penalty say there is no proof capital punishment deters crime. They also say poor people are more likely to be sentenced to death because they cannot afford good

## Nazarbayev shrugs off criticism of Kazakh democracy days before vote

ALMATY (AFP) President Nursultan shrugged off Nazarbayev mounting criticism of Kazakhstan

democracy Monday, days before a presidential vote which some opponents charge has been engineered in his favour. Nazarbayev told AFP in a

written interview that he supported the formation of a multi-party system, local popular elections and an independent media as cornerstones of democracy. But he warned that such reforms in the former Soviet central Asian republie must be instituted gradu-

"I don't accept just any flavour of democracy, if chaos, inter-ethnic feuds and people taking up arms ensues in the country under it!" Nazarbayev said.

The Kazakh president has been criticised for his country's failure to uphold democratic standards in an election Sunday from which his main challenger, former Akezhan premier Kazhegeldin, was banned from running on charges of minor administrative viola-

Nazarbayev vowed to make the election process fair in the hopes of improving his country's tar-

— nished image abroad.

"I think the best way to dispet any and all suspicions is openness and the transparency of the ongoing process," he said, pointing out that workers from the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other election observers have not met with any obstacles.

OSCE officials had asked the government to delay the vote so that the organisation could complete its preparations for the polls, but Kazakh officials refused to change the election date.

The OSCE request followed the government's unexpected decision to move up the presidential elections by one year, thus giving Nazarbayev's opponents less time to mount their campaigns.

If reelected, Nazarbayev said he would lead Kazakhstan through its second stage of transition now that the first step — economic liberalisation - has been completed.

"After the first stage when a state system was formed and the economy was liberalised, we crossed to the next task - the creation of a real multi-party system, an increased role of nongovernmental organisations

and the creation of conditions to transfer part of the functions from the state to self-educated political institutions," he said.

Nazarbayev said a plan now being formulated for the election of a number of deputies in the lower house of parliament, the Majilis, on the basis of party lists is already causing political parties to become more active.

One of the next reforms would be a programme to elect mayors and regional governors, he said.

However, the president in the interview was vague about a time line for these and other reforms.

"It's not possible to exactly plan when and in what certain political reforms will be conducted." he said. "For this, it is always important that the conditions ripen for their introduction.

Nazarbayev linked further political reforms and Kazakhstan's readiness for them with the population's ability to understand the basic principles of a market

economy. After more than 70 years of totalitarian rule, there is a "significant part of society that demonstrates and inability to (adapt to market

principles) and there are people who simply don't wish to recognise true capitalists," he said.

Nazarbayev said the economic and political crises in Russia and Southeast Asia only strengthened his belief that democratisation must follow the economic part of the transition to a market economy.

While Nazarbayev had been loath to admit earlier this year that the financial crises would Kazakhstan, now he said. "the situation in the economy has become a little complicated.

The Kazakh president, who is expected to win-Sunday's election, said the majority of governmental activity in the next one to two years will be directed toward warding off the effects of the world economic crisis on this country of nearly 16 million people.

"We now are counting on ... actively attracting direct, long-term foreign investment in production and we will actively support local producers," he said.

recent Nazarbayev also has announced plans to further the country's privatisation process and introduce private ownership of land.

## Myanmar government, NLD lock horns on independence day

Myanmar's military government and the opposition held separate rallies Monday to mark the 51st anniversary of the country's independence from British colonial rule, and attacked each other's political agen-

Premier and Senior General Than Shwe warned in a message to a pro-government rally at People's Square that the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) party faced the wrath of Myanmar people for attempting to disrupt national objectives.

He was referring to mass rallies organised by semigovernment organisations in 19 big cities nationwide in September and October of last year calling for the disbanding of the NLD and deportation of the party's

leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The NLD and the military have been at political loggerheads ever since the military seized power in 1988

(AFP)

Australian tree frogs could

hold the key to a new range

SYDNEY

ered.

and the government refused to recognise the results of a 1990 general election which the party swept.

The ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) has in the past detained thousands of NLD members and later released political activities.

"We heartily honour the wishes of the masses reverberating from mass meetings expressing the sentiments of the people...," Than Shwe said in his message read out by a senior Yangon military officer to some 13.000 participants at the rally.

Suu Kyì, who has been a thorn in the military's side with her demands for democracy and political freedom, held a low-key but defiant ceremony at the NLD headquarters with top party brass.

The NLD vowed in a statement to press for the convening of a Peoples' Parliament comprising

Scientists discover potential

elected representatives from the 1990 polls.

The party had made the call last year and set up a committee to further its cause. But the SPDC has rejected the NLD's propos-

"This committee hereby ee ita tean this occasion that it will continue persevering with courage for the emergence of the People's Parliament and for the prevalence of democracy and human rights in the country." it

State-owned reported Monday that another 421 NLD members in two townships had resigned from their party. bringing to 6.844 the total number of members who had quit since October last

The NLD has labelled the numbers issued by the government as false and propaganda aimed at demoralising and intimidating its

## S. Korea, U.S. to meet ahead of Korean peace talks

SEOUL (AFP) — U.S. and South Korean officials will meet in Washington next week to prepare for the next round of negotiations aimed at forging a permanent peace for the tense Korean peninsula, officials said Monday.

Seoul and Washington officials will hold working-level talks from Jan. 11 to coordinate their positions ahead of the so-called Four-party Peace Talks in Geneva from Jan. 18 to 22.

The foreign ministry's North American Affairs Bureau's director-general, Kwon Jong-Rak. will lead the Seoul team to the talks, while U.S. special envoy for Korean affairs, Charles Kartman, will head Washington's delegation.

Kwon and Kartman will discuss the agenda at the Geneva peace talks — the first since October - which are aimed at replacing the current tense Korean armistice with a permanent peace mechanism.

The United States. South and North Korea and China will take part in the talks, which are expected to focus mainly on procedural issues.

Previous rounds of the talks have stalled over Pyongyang's insistence that withdrawal of 37,000 U.S. troops from the Korean Peninsula be included on the conference agenda, a call Washington has rejected. The 1950-53 Korean war ended with a truce and not a full peace treaty, leaving the two sides still technically at war near half a century

later.

both fora.

The United States and North Korea have agreed tentatively to hold separate bilateral talks ahead of the fourparty round. Kartman is chief U.S. negotiator with North Korea as well as chief delegate to the peace talks, while North Korea's Kim Gye-Gwan also represents his country in

## Boy and his sister separated in potential landmark case

BOSTON (AP) - A 4-year-FF - 11 1: 5 old boy and his 6-year-old sister exchanged stuffed animak and hugs in a tearful farewell that could spark a U.S. Supreme Court ruling on the rights of siblings who

and Post are adopted or in foster care. The boy's lawyers have appealed to the country's p.m. age highest court to keep the brother and sister together. A ith or low. ruling in favour of the boy uttered for oth landage potentially reunite some 35,000 siblings nation-SHIT HERE

Saturday, the boy -referred to in court papers as "Hugo L." — said goodbye Hugo and Gloria in contact. to his sister, "Gloria L.," in a Department of Social Services office in Boston.

He will begin a new life

with an aunt in New Jersey

while his sister will remain in

Boston's Dorchester section, well as anyone could hope with the foster family that has adopted her.

"It is the saddest of sad days," Susan Dillard, a courtappointed attorney who fought to keep Hugo with his sister and foster mother, said. Hugo's aunt picked him up at the office, presenting him with an Emie doll the boy has come to adore during

in New Jersey and Boston since March. At the meeting, relatives of the aunt and the foster mother discussed plans to keep

dozens of visits with the aunt

They spent a fair amount of time together, and the families talked about how the children would keep in touch with each other," Dillard said. I think it really went as

The farewell came after a ruling by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. which upheld a Juvenile Court decision separating the

Susan Drogin, an attorney for the aunt who now has custody of Hugo, said she expects the boy will get through an initially tough period and come to prosper with his aunt.

"I'm not saying he's going to be happy when he realises his sister and his foster mother are no longer there," she "Of course he will be trau-

matised. But he will be happy again. His aunt is a wonderful, wonderful lady." Hugo's trip through the state's child welfare system began just three days after he was born, when he was placed in foster care. He may have been injured by cocaine his mother used while pregnant, according to court papers.

When Hugo turned 2, the state transferred him to the home of his sister's foster mother, "Enid." It was a traumatic move for the boy, but Hugo prospered under Enid's care, began to call Enid "Mommy" and developed a strong bond with Gloria.

Hugo's aunt, however. fought to gain custody. In deciding to hand him over to her, the state's highest court acknowledged that it had made a "heart-wrenching

## 2 security guards killed, 2 wounded in apartment complex shooting

ne fishing the in the state of COMPTON, California pect was either a frequent (AP) — Two apartment complex security guards were fatally shot and two Others were seriously wounded during an early morning firefight at their

ghard booth. An assailant attacked early Sunday at the New Wilmington Arms, a lowincome housing complex in this community about 30 kilometres south of downlown Los Angeles, said

Police Lt. Danny Sneed. There were no immediate arrests. Police said the sus-

visitor or resident of the complex who had possibly argued with guards the pre-

vious night. Two of the guards were able to return fire, said Terry Jones, spokeswoman for the guards employer, Cleveland-based International

Services. Rodrico Paz. 62, and Remigio Malinao, 49. both of Los Angeles, were each fatally shot in the upper body, Sneed said. Saul Connor Martinez, 59, of Los Angeles, was shot behind the ear. He was in serious but stable condition Sunday night at Martin Luther King Jr.-Drew Medical Centre, a nursing supervisor said.

Doctors said he would be brain dead if he survives, according to Martinez's son, Alfredo Connor. "I never dreamed of coming to a place and seeing

my father like this," said

Connor. "I didn't even

recognise him. Lying there

for some miserable-paying

fourth Rodolso Bombarda, 52, of Carson, suffered wounds to his leg and abdomen. He was in fair condition Sunday night, a nursing supervisor said. Compton has plagued by gang- and drug-

related violence. But residents of the New Wilmington Arms said they felt safe inside the blocklong complex until the shootings. The group of two-story stuceo apartments and trim lawns is home to about 600 people.

paratoid glands," Bowie told

of drugs to fight cancer and voracious bacteria like golden staph which closes hospiall hugely active. tal wards, a university research team has discov-The team, from the

University of Adelaide, has established that the chemical is a very powerful antibacterial agent as well as an arsenal that protected the frog through millions of years includes some of the most powerful hormones, neuropeptides, antibiotics and anti-virals yet found in

Using world-class technology, the team, headed by chemistry professor John Bowie, has isolated more than 150 peptides - compounds of amino-acids while investigating the skin secretions from about 20 of the 200 Australian native

The Magnificent Tree Frog. or Litoria splendida, produces a neuropeptide --or amino-acid compounds found in the frog's nervous system — and analgesic 2.000 times more powerful than morphine which it uses as a hormone, analgesic and toxin to deter enemies that might want to eat it.

drugs. "The Magnificent Tree Frog is most impressive in

the university's Research Digest, seen here Monday. They contain about five or six major peptides which are

When attacked or stressed they secrete the contents of the glands all over their skin, "One of these compounds

antiviral agent. "It is very active against staphylococcus (golden staph) which is one of the most nasty pathogens the one which quite often closes down wards in hospi-

tals." Bowie said that preliminary tests conducted in Adelaide in conjunction with the National Cancer Institute in Washington has shown that this peptide is active against a number of human

tumours. Bowie is also collaborating closely with associate professor Mike Tyler on biological and zoological aspects of the research and with Adelaide Hospital Cancer Centre clinical director. Doctor Ian Olver, to explore the possibilities of using the peptides as anti-cancer

To create an effective anticancer drug they must find a that it has huge glands, called means of delivering the mol-

new wonder drug in frogs ecule specifically to the target side in the body to avoid

harming normal cells. The researchers say the compounds found in the frogs help explain the extraordinary survival of the frogs which evolved from fishes some 300 million years then withstood the kind of catastrophes or climatic changes which wiped out the

But while science is only now discovering the potential of the compounds found in frogs, Tyler said frogs are for the first time in worldwide decline.

dinosaurs.

Their numbers are plummeting in 140 countries around the world for no simple reason, although water pollution is believed to be a likely cause.

"We are seeing a tragic decline of frog populations world wide and if we can't stop it, humans will miss out on this wonderful pharmaceutical factory," said Tyler, who is the Australian representative of an international campaign to save the frog.

"Frogs have an enormous array of natural products and we've really only scratched the surface of understanding what they are and what they

The secretions removed without harming

An interception Arab polytical dealy published in Eaglish by the Jordan Press Posseption Established 1975 جورون تارمز ورمية عربية سياسية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحعية الاردنية

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## **Bad management?**

AFTER THE arrival of new gas shipments from abroad and the increase of local production to meet growing demand, the gas crisis that hit the country in the past few days seems to be over. The problem reached nearpanic level in recent days, prompting Minister of Energy Hani Mulki to take charge of the shortage of gas cylinders in the country that amounted to a supply of only three days of consumption.

The cause of this winter's shortage is no different from previous years. The number of Jordanians who heat their homes with gas has increased in recent years, because fewer Jordanians can afford using more expensive means of heating such as central heating. The authorities should, therefore, make sure to add a certain percentage of gas containers every year to cater for the increase in the use of gas.

The effective steps being undertaken now in the wake of the crisis should have been taken a long time ago in a bid to preempt the projected rise in demand. Surely, the authorities can estimate what the national needs will be during cold weather. This winter season is still mild. Had we the normal winter weather this year, the problem could have been compounded. We should not be unprepared to meet such basic needs. Last summer we witnessed a water crisis. Now we have a gas crisis. Our authorities should plan for all contingencies not to mention all probabilities. While this time around, the gas container situation has been salvaged, it should not have occurred in the first place.,

## **ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES**

Al Ra'i's Fakhri Kawar said that when there are supply problems, citizens are blamed for buying more than they need and putting it in storage to the detriment of other people's. However, he said, it seems that the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company cannot blame people for the gas cylinders' shortage, because it is only partly responsible for the problem. According to Kawar, the 70-hour U.S.-British strikes on Iraq caused the shortage and the company is to blame for not taking any precautionary or even routine measures. The company should have stored extra amounts of gas cylinders for such situations, said the writer. The absence of a strategic gas storage was the real cause of the crisis rather than the trouble in Iraq. Only after the crisis started, did the company began to import an estimated 40,000 tonnes of gas cylinders from new sources and floated a JD20 million tender to increase its storage capacity, claimed Kawar. What are the reasons behind the company's administrative negligence and irresponsibility, asked Kawar.

Al Dustour's Mazen Saket urged government, parliament, the private sector, and civil society's institutions to cooperate and set up a national emergency programme to combat a number of crisis currently facing Jordan. It is obvious that the Kingdom is going through a difficult and sensitive stage, that need appropriate practical and responsible actions to protect the country's economic and social security, said Saket. Jordan must know how to manage such issues, which include economic depression, unemployment, poverty, water shortage and pollution problems as well as the current gas and energy conundrums, said the writer.

## Palestinian houses, Jacob, and the road to heaven and hell

destroying the three-room home of

the Sword of the Father of Jacob.

We Arabs and Israelis share a com-

mon God, a common Abrahamic

patriarch, common reverence for

numerous prophets. common

attachment to this blessed land, and

many common names: Ibrahim/

Avraham/Abraham, Yitzhan/Ishao/

Isaac, Jacob/Yaqub/Yaakov, and

many others. In practice, however,

that which we share in common is

negated by practices such as

THERE I WAS the other day reading an Israeli rabbi's fascinating article on the moral and material legacies of biblical Judah and Joseph — the sons of Jacob when I learned that Israeli troops destroyed two more Palestinian homes in a rural area near Hebron. I was confused -more confused than usual in this land of spiritual and political extravagances.

The rabbi explained that Jacob blessed his son Joseph with a double portion of material well-being (political-military skills), and blessed his son Judah with the kingship and the spiritual legacy of Israel (a redemptive mission). The rabbi concluded: "Hopefully, the newly established Jewish state will merge both messiahs so that a spiritual Torah can provide the proper shape and form for science, technology, art and politics in a peaceful world perfected under the Kingship of God."

Wow, I thought to myself, we should have no problem living together peacefully with an Israeli state and a Jewish people that seeks to perpetuate such fine values. The Prophet Jacob, I thought, was key to this quest for justice, peace and coexistence. Jacob wrestled with God and had his name changed to Israel; his encounter with God

transformed him from a selfish. the Children of Jacob (Israel) were materialistic schemer to a person who trusted in God and spent the rest of his life trying to manifest God's law and righteousness on earth. But then I was rudely brought back to the present reality of soldiers of the state of Israel destroying Palestinian houses.

The television pictures were more shocking than usual --Israeli troops firing tear gas grenades into and then bulldozing the simple, three-room concrete home of a young Palestinian man named Husam Abu Yaqub. He ended up bloodied and beaten after trying unsuccessfully to protect his house, wife and young children.

Israeli soldiers destroying Palestinian houses is nothing new - Israeli groups have documented over 2450 Palestinian homes that Israel has destroyed since 1967. and another nearly 300 that Israel has sealed. This policy has made over 10.450 Palestinians homeless.

I kept pondering the images of Husam Abu Yaqub trying to defend his family and their simple, threeroom home, alongside the image of Jacob's (Israel's) blessings to his children. Suddenly, I realised the cruel but powerful irony: Husam Abu Yaqub in Arabic means the Sword of the Father of Jacob. It just did not make sense to me:

destroying houses. Say it again - "destroying houses" — and think about it for a moment. The reality is far worse than the mere words. Where in God's plans or ethics is there moral space for such a practice? What possible purpose other than

demonic cruelty and sheer, vindictive inhumanity could be served by the state of Israel heartlessly destroying nearly 2500 homes and making over 10,000 Palestinians homeless in the past 32 years? Politically, the policy of systematic house demolitions is not working: legally, it is clearly against the provisions of the Geneva conventions on the behaviour of an occupying power; emotionally, it only breeds greater anger and almost certainly gives birth to humiliated and desperate young Palestinians who will View from the Fourth Circle



#### Rami G. Khouri

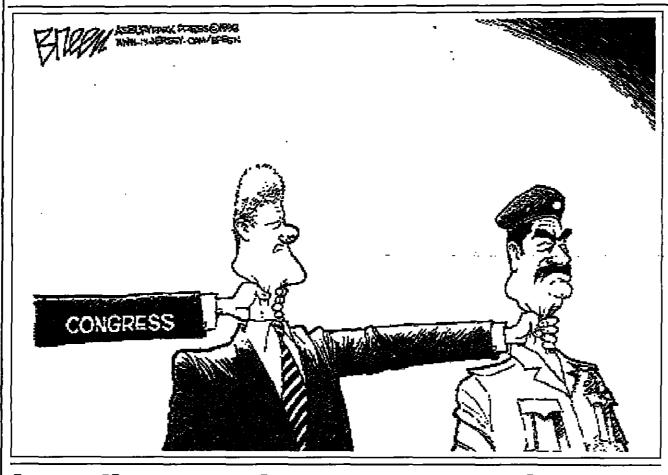
seek revenge by killing Israelis. This Israeli policy of destroying Palestinian houses is cruel, ineffective. illegal, counter-productive,

and morally disgraceful. What are we in the Arab world to think about Jews, Judaism and Israel that pursue this policy of callous house destruction? Is the Israeli House of the Lord of Jacob to be built by stones retrieved from the destroyed house of the Arab Sword of the Father of Jacob? One Jacob's house built from the rubble of another Jacob's house is not a durable edifice at all -- it is a monument of death and double-standards, eternally haunted by its own cold-heartedness, perpetually vul-

nerable to the desperate need for revenge by those who are brutalised and dehumanised, and forever condemned to fear and to carrying rifles and bullet-proof vests. Jacob's mission was to rid our world of such menaces, not to perpetuate them.

Of all the contentious things that Israelis and Jews have done in Palestine, the physical destruction of the homes of Palestinians is perhaps the most monstrous and morally egregious, especially when judged by the noble and life-giving values of Judaism itself. I simplycannot understand how the state of the Jewish people - after their own terrible history of suffering can destroy other people's houses as a systematic, deliberate and official policy.

I went back to reading the rabbi's article about Joseph and Judah, and the Jewish quest for "a peaceful" world perfected under the Kingship of God," but the words were suddenly less convincing. I wanted to believe them, but I kept being distracted by poor Jacob - this enigmatic man, tribe, and nation that builds and destroys at the same time, that preaches life while also causing death, that takes us and itself to heaven and hell in a single. dizzying journey.



## Israelis trample on corpse of peace

By Robert Fisk

YOU HAD only to listen to the journalistic clichés to know 1998 would be the last year of the Middle East "peace process." In January, it had to be "put back on track." By spring, it had to be "resurrected." By autumn, it had to be "salvaged." By year's end, even the BBC World Service's correspondent in Jerusalem was at last forced to admit it was "dying."

Variously regarded as a railway train, a buried corpse, a sinking Titanic - anything rather than admit the truth — the Oslo agreement was in reality dead the moment it was signed. The Wye agreement, dutifully signed by Benyamin Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat in October, was merely part of the wake.

When the Israeli prime minister formally declared Wye "suspended" just before Christmas, it was an acknowledgement that the game was up. There would be no more talks with the Palestinians - but of course, that didn't stop further Jewish settlement-building on Arab land, the continued confiscation of Palestinian identification papers and the continued destruction of Palestinian homes.

By the year's end the Palestine Liberation Organisation [PLO] leader ruled over a garbage-tip Bantustan of slivered towns and refugee camps with the help of 11 secret police forces, prison torture, censorship and total disdain for his people's would-be democratic parliament.

The Middle East peace was supposed to have been founded on U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 of 1967, which called for Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab land in return for the security of all states (including Israel) in the region.

Oslo allowed Israel to renegotiate 242, to decide which bits of occupied land it might "give" to the Palestinians and which bits it would keep. The occupied West Bank was henceforth to be called "disputed," which meant the whole place was up for grabs. Which is why the Israelis started building a new settlement at Jabal Abu Ghneim east of Jerusalem - now called by its Hebrew name of Har Homa - on the basis that Oslo didn't say they couldn't build more settlements on Arab land.

And which is why Mr. Netanyahu's new foreign minister, fresh from securing the Wye agreement, told the Jewish settlers in no control — with the help of the CIA.

the West Bank to "seize every hilltop they can." Each Palestinian objection was treated as an attempt to destroy the "peace process." When Mr. Arafat suspended peace talks because of the Jabal Abu Ghneim/Har Homa settlement, he was accused of wanting to abrogate peace. When Palestinians protested violently against further settlements, they were told they were trying to kill peace.

When Mr. Netanyahu declared Jerusalem the unified and eternal capital, he told the Palestinians they had no right to take away Israeli's sovereignty capital even though the future of Jerusalem, like settlements and Palestinian refugees, was supposed to be part of the final status talks in the Oslo agreement next May.

But when Mr. Arafat, sick and humiliated, scorned by increasing numbers of his own people, suggested he might declare a Palestinian state if there was no May settlement, the Israelis turned on him venge-

First, the Israelis said, the Palestine National Council had renounce — for the second time - the clause in its charter that calls for the destruction of Israel. And only hours before it obediently did so, Israel produced more conditions: no more threats to declare a Palestinian state or violent protests against the peace accord.

Inevitably, the violent Palestinian Hamas movement, still demanding an Islamic state for all of Palestine, continued its war against Israel. "Terrorists," screamed the Israelis. When Jewish settlers shot down Palestinians they were called "extremists" or "zealots." Double standards have also been a foundation of the Oslo agreement.

But the "peace process" is not about fairness or justice: it revolves around just how little the Palestinians will accept in return for being a client kingdom of Israel. The Wye agreement — presided over by the fickle leadership of Bill Clinton — restated all the Oslo conditions that Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat had failed to meet but added a new pro-Israeli clause, which heaped the blame for all violence on to Palestinians.

Mr. Arafat was enjoined to hunt down "terrorists," "terrorist cells" and the "terrorist structure" of "terror groups" - and he could forget the "terrorist" violence of Israeli settlers over whom there was to be

Palestinian jails began to fill up again with "Islamists" and the PLO's torturers went back to work with the CIA's blessing.

Mr. Clinton used the opportunity of "saving the peace" to embellish his own failed statemanship, accepting almost all Israel's demands — even considering the release of an Israeli spy who had been paid to steal American military secrets - while rewarding Mr. Arafat with a visit to Gaza.

For most of the year, the Palestinians burnt American flags. In December, they paused to fly the U.S. flag over Gaza to greet President Clinton as he stepped on to the soil of "Palestine." But within four days once they realised that the "friend" of Palestine was abandoning them again the Palestinians burnt the American flag

Even before Mr. Clinton had left the Middle East, Mr. Netanyahu refused to carry out further troop withdrawals that Israel had promised and then suspended the Wye agreement altogether - no objections from the Americans, of course.

Unable any longer to balance his refusal to abide by the terms of the Oslo accord with the even more bellicose policies of extremists in his cabinet, Mr. Netanyahu called an election, which will suspend all relations with the Palestinians for more than three months - an effective death notice for Oslo.

Syria, which saw through the facade of Oslo from the start, still sticks to Resolution 242 as a foundation of peace and the return by Israel of the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. And so does Lebanon, where Syrian-supported guerrillas from the Hizbollah movement continue to attack Israeli troops occupying the southern part of Lebanon - and whose withdrawal was supposed to have been completed in 1978 under the terms of U.N. Resolution 425.

Israel condemns these "terrorist attacks." demanding yet more conditions that do not appear in the U.N. resolution.

If Labour takes power in the April Israeli elections, say the optimists, maybe the "peace process" will be put back on track again. But the dead cannot be resurrected and by April, the explosion that many in the region have warned of may well have

## Arabs have normal lives too, you know

By Ray Hanania

AFTER COMPLAINING loudly about the unfairness of the movie The Siege, I decided to take my protest one step further. by applying my comments to general Hollywood practice.

Arab Americans have a legitimate demand to be represented fairly by Hollywood, for we are not. Simply put, fairness doesn't exist when it comes to Arab Americans.

Arab Americans want to be treated fairly. We haven't asked Hollywood to discriminate against anyone else.

Despite that, my column in Newsweek which extolled this very principle, seemed to elicit a response from several of its readers who, in effect, concluded that Arabs are only discovering what other ethnic groups in America

Well. I beg to differ.

The example most often cited in response to Arab American demands for fairness is the treatment by Hollywood of Italian

Certainly, Hollywood produces many movies about the Mafia. Good examples of this disparagement include the Godfather trilogy, Goodfellas, Donny Brasco and Casino. These films typify the Hollywood portrayal of Italian American life.

Similar cases can be made for Indians — whose lands were stolen and whose cultures were raped, pillaged and destroyed by the wholesome American pioneers — and other groups including the Irish, Mexicans, and even

But there are two very clear distinctions between how Hollywood handles this example, and how it handles Arab Americans,

1: In most of the movies about Italian Americans and the Mafia, Hollywood counterbalances the disparaging anti-Italian image with an equally important character offering strong positives. In other words, in nearly every movie about the Mafia, there are Italians in the same movie who are not members of organised crime and who provide a positive role model to counterbalance the negative roll models of the mafia

That is exactly what Arab Americans are complaining abour. There is no counterbalance in these movies of Arab terrorism. In nearly every Hollywood movie that has a theme or sub-plot involving either Arabs or the Middle East, nearly every Arab character is negative. Oftentimes. these Arab terrorist are played by Israeli actors who exaggerate the anti-Arab negatives even more to satisfy their own anti-Arab political tendencies.

2: Although there are many movies about the downside of other ethnic groups, there are also many movies that provide positive images of the disparaged groups of Italian Americans, Irish - The Independent | Americans and Jews. In fact,

many films made in Hollywood often focus entirely on casting the suffering of these and other change.

Of some 120 movies made by Hollywood that include an Arab or Middle East theme or sub-plot. there are fewer than five that focus on some positive aspect of Arab culture, society or even his-

ory.
I randomly selected a movie that did not have a Middle East or ethnic bent to determine how-Hollywood portrays the positives of other ethnic groups, in a way that is denied to the portrayal of Arab Americans.

The film I happened upon is "You've Got Mail," which stars Tom Hanks, who I met several years ago while covering an earlier movie production in Chicago for the Chicago Sun-Times, and co-stars Meg Ryan.

The film has nothing to do with anything ethnic. It's not about being Arab. It's not about being Jewish. Yet, there were moments when the producers alfuded to Jewish issues. They even alluded to Italian issues, too.

It's very subtle. It's very dis-

But it is the subtle portrayals of Hollywood's movies that can have as much impact on a movie audience as the obvious efforts some Hollywood producers take to assassinate Arab American and Arab culture in other films.

This is so important to the perceptions that Americans form as a result of heavy doses of exposure to Hollywood films.

The Hanks-Ryan movie is a love story set in the modern age: of Internet e-mail.

Besides the unbelievable experience of seeing American Online connect without any delays or busy signals, and at speeds 10 times faster than reality, the movie engaged the American mentality in its most vulnerable state: Americans love comedies and they love movies about love. These settings usually result in movie audiences leaving theatres sighing, cheerful and happy. And in those moments, the insertion of even the most subtle of ethnic messages benefits from the

Why couldn't Tom Hanks have played one of New York's Arab. citizens engaging in a friendship. and loving relationship with someone they might have encountered through the Internet? Why is it that the only time Hollywood even thinks about adding an element of Arab culture, ethnicity or experience into a movie plot, it always has to be about terrorism? We're normal

people, we have normal lives. And just once, I would like tosee some of that normalcy included in a Hollywood movie that isn't about Middle East issues, but about the everyday experi->ences of a normal American who: happens to be Arab.

The writer is a Palestinian American author and jour

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By Peter K

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## The race is on for the first baby of 2000

A British television company is offering stardom for the first baby of the next millennium

By Peter Kingston

OF ALL days to have a birthday, can there be any worse than New Year's Day? Ponder it for a nanosecond. Most people around you are feeling wretched and hungover to boot. Everyone's fed up with celebrations, their systems added with stale Yule. And the proximity of Christmas means you never get the presents you are due.

"As a child it was so embarrassing," recalls Trevor Grove, former editor of the Sunday Telegraph, who was born on the first day of 1945. "As soon as people started singing Auld Lang Syne, my mum would shout: 'Hey. mentember everybody, its Trevor's birthday'.

But worse, in anniversary terms, would be to pop out on the first day of the new millennium. while much of the Western world, including every consultant obstetrician on the planet, are gelling blasted.

The rule about never giving birth at week-ends, or on major public holidays because the senior medics have left the ship to a skeleton junior crew, will apply to the power of 10. Yet despite all these drawbacks, you can be quite sure that next March, many couples will be at it like knives or rabbits in the hope of conceiving a millennium baby. There is expected to be a 1.5 per cent increase in the birth-rate in the year 2000. And those to whom it won't occur to choose this folly will get a thudding nudge from ITV. For an incentive is being offered, one that catches the essence of these celebrityobsessed times -- stardom. Stardom for life, at that Though it might be rather like spending your life as Jim Carrey in this year's creepy movie about a man born only to be viewed by others, The Truman Show.

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Julia Fix

Yorkshire Television is planning a series called Birthrace 2000 about babies born on January 1, 2000. The aim, says John Whiston. the station's programme director, is to follow couples through pregnancy, through delivery and beyond, perhaps turning up every few

years, along the lines of Seven Up.
In order to get 10 likely couples, Yorkshire
TV will running an advertising campaign urging couples to prepare for congress on the night which medical science calculates will be the most likely, if conception is achieved, to

lob out a January 1 baby. There is some disagreement which will actually be the best night, dubbed the Great British Bonk by Whiston. The initial plan, having taken advice from the National Childbirth Trust, was to pitch it on March 17, an evening which may have excluded many with Irish credentials, who would be distracted by Patrick's memory. But that date may be moved back between March 25 and April 9. On that Yorkshire evening. TV plans programmes to put viewers in the mood. There will probably be suggestive clips from old comedies. footage of various for-

other squidgy stuff. That period would be the window of opportunity (if that's quite the phrase we want), if the target is January 1, says Professor James Drife,

nicating fauna and

professor of obstetrics and gynaecology at Leeds General Infirmary. But even if the correct date is picked for a conception attempt, there is still only a 4 per cent chance of birth happening on the "due date" if nature is allowed to follow its course, he says, "The odds are heavily stacked against success."



The incentive is stardom, a TV series about the babies born on January 1, 2000, though it might be rather like spending your life as Jim Carrey in this year's creepy movie about a man born only to be viewed by others, The Truman Show (file photo)

There are so many imponderables and variables. The two main ones are the odds on conception and then on punctual arrival, "At best the chance of conceiving on a certain cycle if both partners are fine is 1-in-3." The due date is calculated in two ways: 280 days from the start of a woman's period, which for January 1

would be March 25, or 266 days after conception. But the due date is only a rough guide. It is quite usual for birth to come within two weeks either side. And crunching these figures up, you get the 1-in-25

The only half-reliable way for the noodleheaded still dazzled by a millennial birth would be to overshoot, as it were. Babies will and must not be kept in if they are ready to come out, but it is quite feasible to intervene if they are overdue and get them out by Caeserian section or hormonal induction. A Caesarian for other than medical reasons would not normally be countenanced under the NHS for a baby only a few days overdue.

Wanting to deliver right after Big Ben starts ringing in the New Year would not be an exception to this rule, "An obstetrician would say that the very worst time to have a

baby in terms of safety is in the middle of a public holiday, particularly in the middle of the night," says Professor Drife, "A request for a Caesarian for one minute after midnight would be very ill-advised - medical caution would

There are exceptions. Some women who have difficult pregnancies, or have had bad ones in the past, are often given a fixed date for Caesarian births well ahead. Now if that day just happened to be January 1: well... they might be in luck.

In the private sector, however, the rules are looser about "elective" Caesarians, "Career women might successfully elect to have Caesarians because they want to go back to work soon," says Dr. Simon Fishel, an infertility specialist. But even in the private sector, an ambition to whip out the first baby of the third millennium out on deadline would be unlikely to find favour. And even if it did, the cost of assembling the necessary team of surgeon, an aesthetist and the rest of the team during the last hour of 1999 would be prohibitive. Will anybody pay that much for a vanity birth?

Dr. Fishel said that couples wanting medical intervention at conception to boost the chances of a January 1 baby would again be unlikely to find help in the private sector. "We have couples asking for a winter baby because of each partner's work schedules. We basically say: on your bikes." But there are exceptions, says Dr. Fishel. For instance, an international opera star with a tight timetable who was in England for just a month was allowed to have fertility treat-

There are the folkloric means of bringing on labour when the due date has come or passed: a hot curry or hotter lovemaking. And on New Year's Eve there is a further possibility. I reckon I started to move downwards during Auld Lang Syne," says Trevor Grove, "It was all that kicking about my mother was doing."

- The Guardian

## Set a thief to catch a thief

When Trinidad & Tobago found itself saddled with a pest problem it had never encountered before, the old, chemical methods seemed to do no good, so they turned to the use of insects to defeat the invading pest.

By Darryl Dean

GARDENERS IN Trinidad began poticing the danger signs about three years ago: Deformed fruits and flowers on trees and insects overrunning ं सामद्र**ात्रक है** plants, their leaves curled and bunched together in rosente-like fashion in Charge

> The invading bugs, wrapped in their white cotton-like shrouds, spread at an alarming rate through various parts of the country.

The pest - identified as the hibiscus mealybug or maconellicoccus hirsutus (green) — posed a growing threat to food crops, ornamental plants and forests. It also disrupted inter-island trade in the region.

If the bug had managed to spread and get out of control in the Caribbean, officials say it would have had a tremendous impact on the White the price of fruit and vegetables. j productivity

But today, the hibiscus mealybug is reported to be under control in Trinidad and Tobago, and the govemment's handling of the problem is widely regarded as an environmental success story.

"So successful has it been that the scientific community in the region has taken an interest in our management strategy," said Cynthra Persad, coordinator of the pest control programme run by the ministry of agri-

ii an akin culture bere. Agriculture Minister Mohammad cites studies that showed that the agricultural sector would have suffered losses amounting to TT\$700 million over a period of about three years had the government would urree years had the government of Trinidad and Tobago not taken the enting the nece up and nece nece the neces necessary action to deal with the

"We have brought the pest to the we have brought the pest to the level where it is causing no negative economic impact on the agricultural community," Mohammad said.

Sugar, cocoa, coffee and fruits and Sugar, cocoa, conee and many regetables are among Trinidad and lobago's main agricultural exports.

Mohammad also noted that his ministry has been providing techniques in

cal assistance to several countries in assistance to several countries in the Caribbean Community affected by the by the pest and that officials from various countries in Latin America the part of the pa inst-hand information about the systhems which the country developed to deal with the problem. Countries all around the world threatened by the bug could benefit from Trinidad's

Veterinarian Vincent Moe, and adviser to the minister of agriculture. null American to the minister of agriculture, mull american remains a mealybug entered Trinidad at the wharves here agricultural produce from the is a split stand of Grenada

where the pest caused widespread

"We have had a vibrant trade with our Caribbean Community neighbours, including Grenada which had been sending us regular shipments of fresh fruits and vegetables," Dr. Moe

But the discovery of the mealybug in Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago had a considerable impact. In 1995. several Caribbean countries suspended the importation of agricultural products from Trinidad and Tobago and Grenada.

Plant protection regulations were amended here to require import permits for all fruits and vegetables and planting materials.

In September 1995, agriculture ministers of the Caribbean and the

The predatory beetles feed on the bugs at all stages of their development, while the parasitic wasps puncture the adult bugs and feed on the oozing body fluids

Americas declared the hibiscus mealybug a new pest in the Western Hemisphere and a regional action plan was set up with the long-term goal of achieving sustainable control

of the pest. "As long as the insect is present in one country in the region, every other country is at risk," said an official in the Ministry of Agriculture in Port of

Among the projects included in the action plan were developing a regional capability for identifying the pest and its natural enemies, the upgrading of plant quarantine facilities and the mounting of information

a public awareness campaign to inform citizens about the newly-discovered bugs. It also intensified plant quarantine measures and a introduced a pest control programme. At first, Trinidad tried the more tra-

ditional method of pest control:

and public awareness programmes. Trinidad began its action plan with

where they were needed"

Slashing and burning the affected plants and spraying infested areas with chemicals. But this proved ineffective. No chemical pesticide could penetrate the waxy covering with

which the insects protect themselves. "We realised that we had to introduce measures which would destroy the bugs but not harm the environment," said Persad, "So an integrated pest management control programme was launched."

The major focus of this programme was the use of biological control agents, Persad said, noting that this was considered "the best long-term

option." She explained that the type of mealybug discovered in Trinidad and Tobago and other Caribbean countries is commonly found in tropical Africa, South-East Asia and Northern Australia.

Researchers went looking for the pest's natural enemies - other insects which would destroy the hibiscus mealybug. They found three: The Indian and Australian bee-

tles and Asian wasps. The predatory beetles feed on the bugs at all stages of their development, while the parasitic wasps puncture the adult bugs and feed on the oozing body fluids. The female wasps also lay their eggs inside the bugs, preventing them from develop-

ing further. Researchers studied, reared and multiplied the beetles and wasps before releasing them at several sites with heavy mealybug infestations.

"The release were highly successful. The beetles and wasps immediately went on the rampage, attacking the bugs." Persad said.

As part of the ministry of agriculture's plan to make the bio-pesticides more accessible to farmers, several centres to produce the beetles and wasps, were set up in different parts of the country.

Huge samaan trees became ideal locations for the ntultiplication of the beetles.

"These magnificent trees, forty or fifty years old, with canopies extending a quarter of an acre or half an acre, were susceptible to the hibiscus mealybug," Persad said.

"We did lose some sumuun trees during the early stages of the mealybug attack but what was remarkable about the predator beetles was that they found the samaan trees to be excellent places" for producing more beetles.

"And we were able to collect the larvae from the beetles at those locations and move them to other sites

- Gemini News



The picturesque island of St. Helena is facing an ecological disaster (file photo)

## St. Helena ecology is world's most endangered

vices

the island.

By Brendan Boyle Retters

THE TINY South Atlantic island of St. Helena is pinning its hopes for economic growth plants are ranked the most

endangered in the world. The World Conservation Union said in a report last April that 40 per cent - about four times the global average - of St. Helena's plants were

threatened with extinction. On the little volcanic island that juts from the sea some 1,200 miles west of Angola, government conservation chief Rebecca Cairns-Wicks said

the real figure was far higher. Interviewed in her oneroomed workspace behind the museum in the island capital of Jamestown, she said St. Helena had slightly more than 60 said. indigenous plants of which 45 occurred only on the 108 sq. km island, which measures just 16.09 km across.

"I don't think many people realise just how close to extinction many species still are. Of the 45 (endemics) there's only

literally five that are not within the red list," she said. St. Helena, a lonely volcanic peak brushed by the constant covered by Portuguese explor-

ers in 1502 and used as a watering place. They kept its existence a said. secret, putting goats ashore to

breed for mean, but making no effort to settle the island. Britain claimed and settled the island in 1513 and for cen-

Napoleon's final place of exile and as a prison camp for Boers

captured in South Africa. ing, postage stamps, a little of It was the goats that did the most to wreck the pristine ecology of the island, leaving coffee and a tiny tourism on ecological tourism, but its the slopes of the Jamestown valley that flanks the small

> capital bare and red. Inland, however, thickly wooded misty slopes and narrow, winding lanes present an entirely different aspect.

Flax, which was the island's chief export until the British post office switched in the 1960s from sisal string to synthetic nylon, still lines many

"What St. Helena has experienced is that when man comes along with associated animals and plants, species that were found then very, very quickly disappeared, Cairns-Wicks

"We have very rare flora, where species have been reduced to one or two individuals." With a shoestring budget and the dedication of islanders committed to undoing the damage wrought by goats. donkeys and alien plants, con-cuttings, coddling seedlings servationists are slowly revers- and pollinating young plants in ing the decline.

"Maybe, one day many. many years from here, we'll south-east tradewinds, was dis- have habitats that perhaps resemble what once was here. but at the moment we have a team make sure they are able very disturbed habitat," she to breed.

Smallman, who says tourism to travel. You've got one in ket," he said. is the island's best hope of Scotland and one in Mount Pleasant and a couple up High breaking its financial dependence on handouts from Lon- Peak. turies. St. Helena served as a don, said the conservation pro-"The bees can't get to those watering place for ships, as a gramme was showing real suc- areas because of the distance, so we have to hand pollinate;" telegraph relay station, as cesses.

St. Helena, with a population—she said. of fewer than 6,000, generates

about \$9.95 million from fish-

and infrastructure,

is the only means of reaching

have, probably a lot is being

Smallman said in an interview

in the waterfront castle built

after Britain settled the island.

been brought back from the

brink of extinction and within

the past month, conservation-

ists had found a single exam-

ple of a boxwood plant thought

In an area known simply as

to have died out decades ago.

Scotland, Vanessa Thomas is

coaxing life back into species

that have been reduced to sin-

plants have been returned to

special seed orchards.

He said some plants had

"For the size of government

(for conservation),"

The island has a small grant from the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) and a bit more the world's most expensive from other conservation agencies, but as a British dependency, it has been denied the status Britain injects a further 8.5 and aid flow of a developing

million pounds in funding, ser- country. Jasper Steele. St. Helena's including the passenger cargo chief agricultural and natural ship RMS. St. Helena, which resources officer, sees the ecology as the key to financial

independence. "St. Helena has the image of and the financial resources we an island that is unspoiled, but in fact it has been fairly thoroughly spoiled over the years by the devastation of the goats and donkeys and cats and so on," he said.

Though the island is not unspoiled, it is unpolluted and Steele believes there is a business to be made out of that.

"What I am trying to do is to establish our department as an organic certification body under the auspices of the Soil Association of the United Kingdom.

"We'd be in a position evengle trees and shrubs, nurturing tually to certify products from the island as being organic with the Soil Association logo." Steele believes the Where it has been possible to growing global market for grow from the last survivors, products grown and made without chemicals and fertilisthe wild and Thomas and her ers is one that St. Helena could

"I think this is very important because this is where the We do hand pollination British Governor David because its too far for the bees niche lies -- in this purity mar-

> Right now, the island's most pressing needs are for investors to set up that business and for funding to save the plants that help to make the

## Smiles all round as euro makes solid start

LONDON (R) — The euro got off to a strong start on Monday as politicians and investors hailed the historic launch of a single currency for nearly 300 million Europeans as ushering in a new era of economic integration.

The euro fell back from its early highs above \$1.19 to trade around \$1.1790 at 1430 GMT, still well above the \$1.16875 level at which its precursor, the European Currency Unit. ended its life on Thursday.

Stock and bond markets across Europe toasted the arrival of economic and monetary union (EMU), rising sharply on expectations that the euro will boost prosperity and grow to challenge the global dominance of the dollar.

European Commission President Jacques Santer said he was very satisfied with the euro's smooth debut, which caps 40 years of ever-closer economic cooperation aimed at securing peace and security on a continent that spawned the century's two

"A new era has started," Santer told Reuters Televi-

world wars.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder added: "I know the importance of this currency. I know that it will make Europe move

The actual start of euro trading, after months of painstaking preparations in dealing rooms around the globe, was something of a

"The birth of the new currency has gone well it does not need an incubator and it is well, alive and kicking," said David Bloom, currency strategist at HSBC Markets.

Banks and brokerages reported few if any technical glitches but experts cautioned that it would be a few days before they could be sure that the proceeds of the first day's euro trades been properly

processed. "Before we declare this a complete triumph, let's just wait till the settlement is done of the first few trades," Graham Bishop of Salomon Smith Barney in London said.

The 11 countries that adopted the euro on Jan. 1 Austria, Belgium, Finland. France, Germany, expect now that the euro is Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain — have about the same economic output and share of world trade as the United States.

This weight is likely to give the euro a firm underpinning, especially as international investors and central banks switch some of their holdings out of the dollar, economists say.

"The euro will start to challenge the dollar as the world's lead currency as soon as the European Central Bank and the new currency establish their credibility - which will probably be quite soon," U.S. economist Fred Bergsten wrote in the International Herald Tribune.

there, is credible, by international investors in particular will push the euro higher rather than lower," added Norbert Walter. chief economist at Deutsche Bank in Frank-

Investors, now looking at a huge seamless single market for bonds and equities cemented by the euro. reacted enthusiastically to

the euro's debut. Shares in Germany, France. Italy and Spain all rose by more than 3.5 per cent. Only Britain, which is standing aloof from the single currency, failed to join the party.

Leading shares in London were down 0.26 per cent, but a government popular opinion could swing in favour of the single currency if Britons see that it makes goods cheaper and travel easier.

"The creeping euro has been a phrase that people have used. I think it's very possible that it will become the galloping euro because people will see the value in having a single currency.' junior trade minister Lord David Simon said.

National Australia Bank in Sydney, the first foreign exchange centre to reopen after the New Year's break. claimed the honours for the first official trade in euros.

**Exchange Rates** 

The bank said it bought the currency on behalf of John Fairfax Holdings, an Australian

The partners in the euro and the ECB, which will set a single interest rate for all 11 countries, were bullish about the currency's prospects.

The euro is a serious. solid, stable currency, Bank of France governor Jean-Claude Trichet said.

"It had a good welcome." But some sounded a note of caution amid the europhoria.

"Whether or not EMU is

Monday, 04 -D1 - 99

a success in the sense of bringing down European unemployment in a context of low inflation, growth and so forth remains to be seen. But on the technicalities so far, fingers crossed everything's smooth," said Alison Cottrell of Paine Webber in London.

Things were not smooth. though, for Dutch Finance Minister Getrit Zalm. He was hit by two cakes thrown by anti-euro protesters when he arrived to mark the start of trading in the single currency at the Amsterdam bourse.

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## "The portfolio shifts I Asian central banks seen adding euro to reserves

holders of external reserves such as Taiwan and China, as well as other Asian central banks, are expected to diversify their reserves to include the euro while trimming U.S. dollar holdings, analysts say.

As holders of about 40 per cent of the world's reserves, Asian central banks have looked forward to the birth of the euro since regional currencies pegged to the U.S. dollar were hurt more than others during the region's financial crisis, they said.

"Major reserves holders as well as other Asian nations seem to have realised the danger of holding too many dollars so they should be eager to diversify their reserves. The euro launch comes at the right time as they are looking for alternatives," said Yoshio Maki, research associate at Fuji Research Institute.

"Many nations in Asia must be considering using the euro as their potential key reserve currency," Maki added.

Some Asian nations have already expressed an interest in holding euros. In December, an official at China's central bank reportedly said it will gradually increase the proportion of euros in its foreign reserves, the world's sec-

ond-largest. "The People's Bank of China plans to adjust the mix of China's foreign reserves, appropriately reducing holdings in the U.S. dollar and increasing holdings in the euro," the official International Finance News newspaper said, quoting Wang Yu, an official with the central bank's research bureau.

About 19 per cent of China's external reserves are made up of European currencies, with the dollar accounting for 62 per cent and the yen about eight per cent. As of the end of October. China's reserves stood at \$143.7 billion.

Analysts said the ratio of euros in China's reserves was expected to rise to about 30 to 40 per cent after its launch.

Last July, Taiwan's Unit-

ed Daily News newspaper said Taiwan planned to hold 10 billion euro as part of its

external reserves. Taiwan reported its foreign exchange reserves stood at \$88.074 billion at the end of November.

Bundesbank German President Hans Tietmeyer said in Tokyo in July that the euro had potential to surpass the current status of the mark as an official reserve currency in Asian central banks.

After meeting leaders of Asian central banks, Tietmeyer said the banks would likely monitor the euro carefully to see if it could maintain a stable and credible status over the long

The International Monetary Fund said the mark accounted for about 12.8 per cent of international foreign reserves and the 1997.

Analysts said the timing of a shift into the euro would depend on the performance of the dollar in the near future and on economic trends in Europe and the United States. Fumiyuki Sasaki, an

economist at Nomura Research Institute. said: "It's simple. Central banks are focusing on the euro because the dollar and the ven have not been stable in recent years. If they were stable, the banks would not consider diversifying their reserves to include the

"Holding the dollar heavily in their reserves is very risky now. We can see this just by looking at the behaviour of the dollar in recent months." Sasaki

Analysts are also sceptical about the dollar's position as the key currency while the United States remains the largest debtor nation and holder of the world's biggest trade deficit.

"There are safe-haven needs to hold the dollar, such as for security purposes, but the dollar's position as the leading key currency could be shaken if the value of the dollar starts depreciating rapidly again, said Atsushi Niigata, a researcher at Fuji Research.

"That could be the time when Asian central banks start shifting their reserves into the euro. Milgata said Some analysts said the

shift in reserves would happen gradually and euro reserves might not rise dramatically in the short-term. given the underlying trade structure in Asia, where the United States remains a major trading partner.

Japan's finance ministry has been tight-lipped about disclosing details of its external reserves, but a senior ministry official said there is a possibility that the world's largest reserve holders, including Japan, could switch part of their dollar reserves into euros.

"But we will not be doing so in an abrupt manner. We will wait until liquidity in the euro and smooth convertibility into other currencies are secured," the official said.

Japan would like to see how euro zone nations deal with having their monetary and foreign exchange policy management bound together and how they address the impact of a possible cyclical economic downturn, he said.

It has also stepped up efforts to globalise the yen to prevent it from lagging behind after the launch of the euro.

In mid-December, the ministry announced measures including the exemption of withholding tax payments by non-residents on interest income earned from Japanese government bonds.

Anomer senior finance

Ministry official said central banks may boost their use of yen in reserves following the measures. Some analysts also said

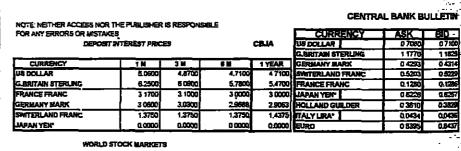
the introduction of the euro was not expected to hurt the yen's position as a reserve currency.

"As many Asian countries are aiming to diversify their reserves, I don't expect they will cut back reserves in yen, as global reserves holdings in yen only amount to about five per cent of the total," a Japanese research institute offi-

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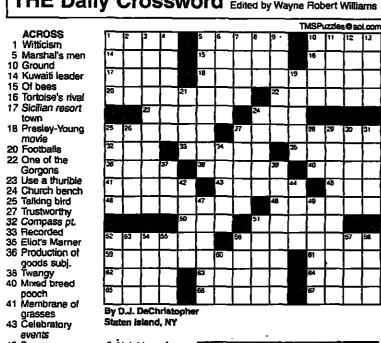
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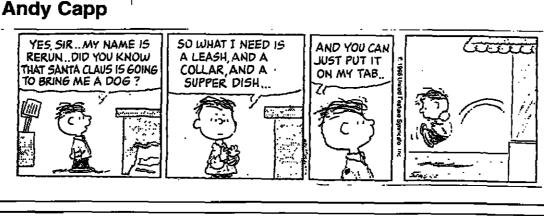
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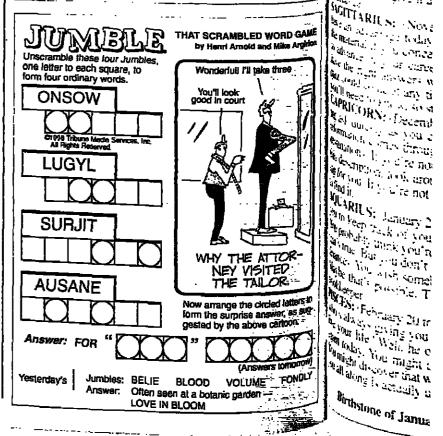
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## A review of news from the Arabic Press

## Banker sees difficulties in improving living standard if high population growth continues

\*\* IF POPULATION growth continues at the same rates witnessed during the past 30 years, it would be very difficult to expect a nonceable improvement in the living stan-dard, a senior Jordanian banker said in a lecture recently. He stressed the importance of overcoming the imbalance hetween the high rate of population growth and the inability to increase the resources in a way and by a volume that would maintain equilibrium in the relationship or improve it in the service of the people.

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Wasef Azar, general manager of the Jordan National Bank, said the Jordanian society did not give enough attention to the imbalance between the resources and the population. He proposed remedying the imbalance through controlling the annual population growth and reducing it to the lowest possible level on the one hand and on the other hand, seeking to boost the available resources so as the share per capita would be much more than what it is

The senior banker said there has been improvement recently in legislative development but, he added: "It still lacks a more comprehensive interaction with the private sector in all aspects and its implementation is slow." Azar indicated that if many legislations, including economic ones, were completed they still have not matched the developments in terms of opening up to the outside world as new dimensions with

direct economic effects were taking place. "If Jordan is unable to stay away from in international requirements to open its market, it must therefore move fast to develop legislations in order to place the productive sectors on the same footing with foreign competitors or to neutralise the advantage

they enjoy and are not available to the Jordanian producer.

The most important legislation needing updating is the customs law or the regulations for its implementation, Azar said. In addition, he mentioned the importance of expediting the issuance of a law to protect local production. Such a law would provide the necessary measures to counter dumping policies and price undercutting. "There could also be a need to bring in legislations for encouraging competition and banning monopoly and protecting intellectual property rights," the senior banker said noting that both legislations would be important for foreign producers and damaging for the Jordanian market. "Should there be no way except to issue such legislations, it would be appropriate if the public sector would ease their effects on Jordanian producers and consumers.

The last area mentioned by the lecturer was the administrative development which he described as below the acceptable level despite the overwhelming desire of the political leadership and the consecutive governments for improvements and for minimising routine which stands as the major barrier facing investors, producers and exporters.

"The civil servant is still not directed or trained in many institutions to provide the good service at the lowest cost and in quickest time," Azar said adding: "Many civil servants do not realise the amount of loss for the country as a result of the administrative complexities which may not be the fault of the employee is as much as the efficiency of regulations which have not been reconsidered and revised." (Al

## Europhoria grips European markets

LONDON (AFP) — The euro immediately staked its claim as a world-leading currency Monday in a successful first day of trading in London, with euphoria spreading to Europe's stock

Challenging the dollar and yen as the dominant tender, the 11-nation currency sustained its firm worldwide debut overnight in Asia, dipping on profit-taking before rising back above the \$1.18

"In all likelihood, it'll become the second largest traded currency, but it's far too soon to say so," said Paul Meggyesi, senior currency economist at Deutsche Bank.

Chief European economist at ING Barings in London, Mark Cliffe, said the first day of the euro's life had "gone remarkably smoothly." although "people are trading very warily."

Late Monday in London, the world's leading foreign exchange market, the new currency traded at \$1.1870. up from \$1.1795 at midday and \$1.1810 on opening. It was being traded at 133.07 yen, compared to 134,28 yen earlier and 134,57 yen in

On Thursday the last reference rate for the ECU, which was transformed into the euro, was \$1.16675 and 132.800 yen.

The European Central Bank (ECB), the guardian of the euro, late Monday issued its first euro reference rates as one euro equalling \$1.1789, 133.73 yen, 0.711 pounds and 1.6168 Swiss francs.

An economist with the Bank of America in London, Robert Hayward, said that the euro might rise as high as \$1.22 in the next few days.

Stock markets in continental Europe bounded into the stratosphere in reaction, with Frankfurt's X-DAX closing 5.67 per cent higher, the Paris CAC-40 5.20 per cent higher, Madrid's Ibex-35 6.21 per cent higher, and higher.

However, because the strength of the euro would make European exports more expensive, the upward drive was expected to make the equity boom short-lived, analysts said.

London, which is outside the euro zone, closed 0.05 per cent lower on a bearish outlook for the British economy this year.

The euro, which is joined by all EU members except Britain, Denmark, Greece and Sweden, was broadly hailed as a new super curren-

In Japan, Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi was quoted as saying by Jiji Press that the yen was far behind in the new "triangle system," saying that "the yen maintains only a five per cent share" of the world market.

Deputy However, U.S.

Lawrence Summers said that he did not expect the dollar to pushed off its perch as the world's preferred reserve currency.

"I don't see a reason why the euro should be a threat ... as long as we can keep our own emphasis on our fundamentals," he said.

Asked if a possible erosion in the dollar's status as the world's reserve currency could prompt higher U.S. interest rates to shore up the greenback, Summers said: "As far as the dollar is concerned now, the buck stops here.

"As long as we keep our fundamentals strong. I think the dollar and U.S. borrowing costs will be just fine," he added

Britain is deeply divided over whether or not to join the euro zone and Prime Minister Tony Blair reiterated his pledge to hold a referendum when he considered the economic conditions to be right.

However, London is expected to be able to maintain its role as Europe's dominant financial centre, analysts said.

Foreign exchange analysts in London expressed relief that the weekend's hectic preparations for the market launch of the euro had gone well, but said that volumes were cautiously low.

London's banks and brokerages had just over three days from Thursday to convert their trading systems and accounts from the 11 participating national currencies into euros in time for Monday morning.

"The biggest fear was a crash of systems and there hasn't been one," the global head of treasury research at ABN Amro, Tony Norfield,

"It's hard to judge a much more definite direction with the small amount of trading going on," he said. "The market is taking it easy for the first day of trading and is waiting to see if all the com-

In Frankfurt, the ECB dismissed as "rumours" reports that it had intervened earlier in Asia to prevent the euro rising too strongly against the dollar.

"These are rumours and we not comment on rumours," ECB spokesman Manfred Koerber said.

Meanwhile, the pound weakened to 1.4089 euro to the pound from an estimated 1,4139 when euro conversion rates were set on Thursday, and was likely to continue to fall to about 1.40 euros. analysts said.

Nick Parsons, at Paribas, said "the British pound and the Swiss franc are going to be more and more marginalised.

The British currency is also under pressure ahead of a Bank of England monetary policy meeting on Wednesday and Thursday. Bank of England Governor

Eddie George said Monday that British interest rates at 6.25 per cent, compared to three per cent in the euro zone -- could continue to fall if inflation remains low.

Meanwhile, U.S. traders reacted cautiously to the euro in early trading here Monday, waiting to see which way the market would take the new currency once the euphoria surrounding its lauch declined.

"It's replaced the mark as the main European currency. so there is of course a lot of portfolio reallocation in euros," said Henry Willmore. senior economist at Barclays' Capital." But we saw the curiosity fading out of Asia overnight."

The euro was trading at \$1.18 dollars in early trade in New York after closing at 1.1885 in Asia.

For the moment added Paul Farrell, an analyst with Chase Manhattan Bank, "the market is trying to get a sense of where it should be."

"It's not in the European interest to have a very strong euro right now," he said."A strong euro is fine to get confidence in the new arrangement but a euro too strong would squash any export-led

recovery they might have." Strong currencies tend to drive up prices of exports, making them less competitive.

In the long run, Farrell added, the euro-dollar exchange rate "should be very similar to the European Currency Unit (ECU). except for the sterling component. The ECU, which was

replaced by the euro, closed out its career on Thursday at \$1.1721, sustained by gains in the British pound sterling. Dealers said the initial response to the euro has been

positive and is likely to remain so over the new few months. But analysts stressed that such asset reallocation could

ve to reflect European eco nomic fundamentals. U.S. officials meanwhile hailed European monetary union and reiterated their conviction that a strong euro would not threaten the status

"The United States has always supported an integrated Europe and any thing that steps forward to that goal is supported by the U.S. government and anything that generates growth is good for the American economy, White House spokesman Lockhard

reporters. Both Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin and his deputy. Lawrence Summers, stressed that the United States had nothing to fear from the euro

"The euro just reemphasises ... how important it is to focus on our own policies

United States a place where people want to invest their capital." Rubin said.

"I have no doubt that markets will fluctuate as they always do ... That is not where our focus needs to be. Our focus needs to be on keeping our house in order and when our house is in order we will be in fine shape." he emphasised

Interviewed by CNBC television, Summers said he was confident the European Central Bank would be committed to exchange rate stability regardless of any potential trade disputes with Washington.

"We have recognised for a long time that the dollar exchange rate cannot and should not be a tool of trade policy," Summers said.

"I think it is clear from statements of the European Central Bank that they recognise the importance of currency stability, and they know, as we often say, that no nation or for that matter region can devalue its way to

prosperity." Summers said. Europeans are going to

seek competitiveness in the same way as we do - by producing better products at lower cost. That's the way it ought to be done."

in the run-up to the launch of the euro, analysts in both Europe and the United States foresaw a situation in which a successful European currency could have a recogniseable impact on the U.S. economy.

"The euro pretty quickly will start to rival the dollar as an international asset," Fred Bergsten, director of Washington's Institute for International Economics, told the Wall Street Journal.

Other analysis have raised the possibility that the euro. the first truly alternative vehicle to the dollar, might divert huge amounts of international funds that until now have rended to flow with little question into the U.S. economy.

They have said the development of more liquid European financial markets could drain off some of the \$11 trillion that were invested in U.S. equity markets in 1997.

## **HOROSCOPE**

FORECAST FOR JANUARY, TUESDAY 5, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) There's more work than you could possibly do without getting organised. This isn't your forte, but luckily you do have one or two friends who are organised. They'll be a big help to you now. Get them to assist you in setting up a schedule. That's the only way

you're going to get anything done. TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Somebody you love needs something, and you could provide it. You'd get a chance to prove you're not only attractive, but also a good friend. And you might even make more friends in the process. People who see you taking care of others this way will be impressed. You do it naturally, but be on the lookout for the

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You'd rather think about distant projects, but something close to home needs your attention. You don't have to give up your dreams, but you might have to postpone them. If you move quickly, you could also provide something an older person needs. It'll make a big difference in his or her life. Be watching for a way to help. CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You're on the edge of a new discovery, and also on the edge of your seat. Its exciting to team something new, and this could be profitable, too. There's a test involved. You'll have to prove you've mastered a skill that's required. You are up to the task, so relax. When the going gets tough, you'll remember what to do

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Financial transactions take up most of your time and attention, or they should. A mistake could compound itself negatively. If you do things right, you'll make more interest, and you've already thought of interesting ways to spend it, speaking of interest. Its important for you to know what's going on, so do the homework. VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You've got new levels of confidence, and you don't even know from where. Well, you don't have to know. Just trust that its OK for you to speak out and do what you do best. You've had the pressure before. Now you're getting the attention. You might as

well rake in a few of the rewards, too. LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) A person you respect is leaning on you to do things right. You want to play in the big leagues, so you're anxious to please. But there's a catch, The secret is to relax, not to work harder. If you can manage to do that; you'll find that everything gets handled effort-

CORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You could make quite a bit of money today if you play your cards right. Get team working with you. Tell them what you'd like to produce and how you want to do it. If you're decisive, they'll produce the results you asked for. If you're not used to working with a team, give it a try. You couldn't find a better day

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You have an advantage today. You're smart, and you can learn the material if you concentrate. In fact, you might even get to advance in your career. The possibility is there, if you have the right answers when you're asked. Be ready. The quiz could come at any time. You have a good idea of what

you'll need to know, so study up. CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You're learning ask quickly as you can, but you're also teaching. The information comes through you, then gets routed to distant destinations. If you're not already doing something that fits this description, look around. The perfect job may be waiting for you, If you're not in it already, this is the perfect day

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) It'll be easier for you to keep track of your finances during this next phase. You probably think you're a very detail-oriented person, and that's true. But you don't usually like details associated with finances. You wish somebody else would take care of that Maybe that's possible. This is a good day to hire a Virgo

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You know that person Who's always giving you helpful advice, telling you how to live your life? Well, he or she is going to be on your case appin to the profession to the profes again today. You might as well listen politely. Take notes. You might discover that what this person's been trying to tell you all along is actually useful.

Birthstone of January: Garnet - Rose Quartz

## Third Israel cellular company launches

one of the most heavily satu-

Orange Partner.

is possible is rising every day," Romano said.

TEL AVIV (R) — Orange keting campaign in Israel on Thursday aiming to penetrate rated mobile telephone mar-

kets in the world.

the first to operate on a GSM (Global System for Mobile work, allowing subscribers to use the phones at home and abroad.

product to be the best in qual-Romano, a vice president at

"Our customers can now roam in 44 countries and the number of countries where it

# sales drive

Communications

"From Jan. 1. we are launching our marketing campaign and are sure we will get a huge number of subscribers. We are positive the Israeli public will find our ity and service," said Haim

The Orange-branded network in Israel is the country's third cellphone provider but Communications) digital net-

# only take the euro so far, as the new currency will soon

of the dollar as the world's leading reserve currency. Joseph

- provided U.S. economic fundamentals remain sound.

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JC. GULF INS	1.610	1.690	+
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ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	2.660	2.740	+
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1.220	1.240	+
RAFIA DAR AL DAWA	0.520 5.100	0,530 5,200	+
MIDDEL EAST COMPLEX	0.560	0.550	
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1.900	1.860	:
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.390	0.400	+ ;
NT'L IND PETRO - CHEMICAL	0,350 0.330	0.370	+ :
ROCKWOOL	0.290	0.290	
NT'L CABLE	0.650	0.650	
SULPHO - CHEMICALS	0,380	0.390	_+;
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## United States beaten in day of Hopman Cup shocks

PERTH (AFP) - Sweden scored an upset win over the Lindsay Davenport-led United States and France's Sandrine Testud beat Spanish star Arantxa Sanchez Vicario in a day of shocks at the Hopman Cup on Monday.

Davenport and Jan-Michael Gambill, the second seeds in the mixed teams competition, suffered a shock defeat against the unseeded Swedish pair of Jonas Bjorkman and Asa Carlsson.

Bjorkman and Carlsson won the decisive mixed doubles 7-6 (7/2), 6-4 after the singles honours had been shared.

Davenport, the World No. 1, blitzed Carlsson 6-2, 6-0 in 52 minutes in the women's singles but Bjorkman revived Swedish hopes when he Gambill 6-2, 6-4.

Bjorkman battled through with a troublesome right hamstring which could handicap him in the rest of the tournament.

"I even surprised myself that I played so well in the singles and doubles," Bjorkman said.

Davenport said the defeat was obviously a setback to U.S. hopes, but they were

not out of the competition. "We have to be positive about it," she said. "The more we play together, the better we will get. The mixed doubles was a bit awkward today. I felt a little bit out of place."

Gambill said there were controversial calls for both teams in the doubles.

"One call in the first set tiebreaker was the worst I have ever seen in my short career. It is just one point, but it hard for you to get it out of your head," he said.

The United States must now win their next two against matches Switzerland's

Heuberger and Martina Hingis on Thursday and the third-seeded reigning Slovak champions Karol Karina Kucera and Habsudova on Friday, to have a chance of reaching Saturday's final.

Testud romped to a 6-1, 6-3 win over Sanchez Vicario as unseeded France made a marvellous start to their contest with title favorites Spain.

"Arantxa did not play her best today, but I am very happy to have won," said Testud.

"She is a very good player, and I just tried to keep concentrating."

It was Testud's third successive win against the Spaniard, following victories at Key Biscayne and San Diego in 1997.

Before that, the Spaniard had won three consecutive matches against Testud.

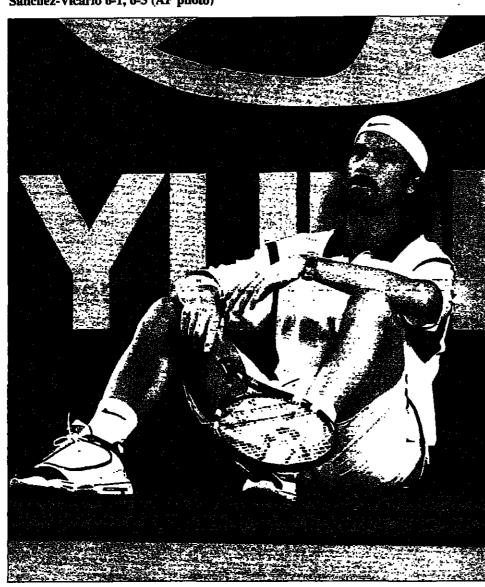
Testud, ranked 14th in the world - 10 places below her opponent - powerfully broke the Spaniard's service in the fourth and sixth games of the opening set.

Sanchez picked up her game in the second set, breaking Testud twice to take a 3-1 lead before the French player rallied to break back in the fifth, seventh and ninth games.

In the men's singles, France's Guillaume Raoux. ranked 53rd in the world, was playing Spain's World No.5 Carlos Moya.



Sandrine Testud of France in action against opponent Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario of Spain during their match at the Hopman Cup in Perth, Australia. Testud defeated Sanchez-Vicario 6-1, 6-3 (AP photo)



Carlos Moya of Spain slumps against a courtside wall as he waits for French opponent Guillaume Raoux replace a broken shoe lace during their match at the Hopman Cup in Perth, Australia, Monday. Moya defeated Raoux, winning the match 7-6, 2-6, 6-3 (AP photo)



Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario of Spain in action against opponent Sandrine Testud of France. Sanchez-Vicario lost the match to Testud 1-6, 3-6 (AP photo)

## Kuerten wins in Australian hardcourts

ADELAIDĒ (AFP) — Brazilian Gustavo defeated Kuerten Frenchman Jerome Golmard 7-5, 6-1 in a quick opening round match at the Australian men's hardcourt championships here Monday.

The third seed former French Open champion broke Golmard's serve to take the tight first set then streaked away, winning five straight games to take the second set with a sizzling display of

Australian Michael Tebbutt made it through to the second round by Canadian beating Sebastian Lareau 6-3, 3-6, 6-1.

Scott Draper fought back to win through to the second round by beating American Justin Gimelstob 3-6, 7-6 (8/6),

In his first tournament following a three-month lay-off since the U.S. Open, Draper struggled and showed signs of frustration, breaking a racket at one point.

But Draper said the right knee injury that troubled him throughout 1998 was no longer a problem and every match he could fit in now was a bonus ahead of the Australian Open.

## Krajicek presses for details of Korda dope test

Former Wimbledon champion Richard Krajicek on Monday called on his fellow players to demand details of why Petr Korda escaped suspension for

taking steroids. Krajicek called on the International Federation to fully explain its lenient stance after the 30-year-old Australian Open champion from the Czech Republic failed a drug test at Wimbledon last

"Now is the time for the players to start asking questions about what realhappened." Krajicek, the world No.10 who is practising for next week's Sydney internation-

"It's a very sensitive issue to talk about but I don't understand it. "If he tested positive maybe he must have done it but maybe there must be another side to the story.

Either you test positive or you don't and people should know exactly what went on. "If the ITF really did make some kind of mistake

with the test it's very bad for Petr because now he's got the name and it's going to be very tough to shake Korda intends to defend

his Australian Open title this month despite the announcement of the positive test for the banned steroid Nandrolone. Most major sports ban

first-time steroid offenders for two years. The ITF, which runs the four grand slams, has provision for a maximum one-year suspension.

But the ITF merely took away Korda's Wimbledon

prizemoney and 199-computer ranking points at a meeting on December 22 Korda has said he will now shelve his retirement

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de goulet and the co

plans because of the scandal. He is defending his Qatar Open title in Doha this week. "I'll prove myself as a player here at Doha I am determined to climb back

intend to quit in around two years," he said last week. "I have been proved innocent by the ITF and

up the world rankings. T

the decision will be announced shortly." The ITF has also been criticised for keeping Korda's positive test quiet until the punishment was decided by its independent

appeal committee last

## Sugiyama wins tense opener to Australian women's hardcourts

HOPE ISLAND, Australia (AFP) — Defending champion Ai Sugiyama of Japan won a tense three-set match against American Corina Morariu to reach the second round of the Australian women's hardcourt championships here Monday.

The fourth seed and World No. 18, who was runner-up in 1997 and winner last year, beat Morariu 6-2, 6-7 (6/8), 6-3.

She now plays Sarah Pitkowski of France who made fewer mistakes to beat erratic Australian Alicia Molik 6-3, 6-2. Ruxandra Romania's

Dragomir won her first. match beating Ukrainian Elena Taytarkova 6-1-6-3.-Wang Shi-ting of Taiwan now plays second seed Schnyder Patty Switzerland in the next round of the \$108,000 event.

Top seed Mary Pierce of France took her day off to herald the women's game. "I love watching men's

tennis but nowadays I think women's tennis is much more exciting because there's so much more depth," she said. There are no easy first

rounds anymore. It keeps you on your toes and I think it's more exciting for the public."

Ranked seven in the world, the Frenchwoman won four titles in 1998 and reached the quarter-finals in the Australian Open which overcame Sylvia Plischke she won in 1995 for her of Austria 6-4, 7-6 (7/2) and only grand slam title.

A good year on and off the court, including her engagement to U.S. Major League baseballer Roberto Alomar has Pierce looking forward to 1999.

"I had good year in all senses and I think I'm maturing as a person and as a player," Pierce said.

Important to Pierce is a good showing in the Australian Melbourne. "From my own standbom

it's always been an important tournament for me," Pierce said. "All grand slams<del>∷are</del>

important and when L won in 95 that was the most memorable moment of my career and I feel very confortable playing there

## Young and 49ers snap Packer jinx in spectacular style

SAN FRANCISCO (AFP) — Steve Young and the San Francisco 49ers ended their American football frustration against Green Bay in amazing fashion here Sunday with receiver Terrell Owens going from goat to hero.

Owens caught a 25-yard touchdown pass from Young with three seconds remaining to give the 49ers a 30-27 first-round National Football League playoff victory over the Packers.

Second-year receiver Owens found redemption in the end zone, clinging to the ball after being hit by two defenders after dropping four passes and losing a fumble earlier in the game.

"I started out with a fumble and dropping a few passes. It was a tough day," Owens said. "Everybody stayed with me. They told me to shake it off. I knew somebody was going to have to make a big play.

Steve Young gave me a chance and the Lord gave it to me." Young was winless in eight career games against Green Bay, which had knocked the 49ers out of the playoffs the past three sea-

sons and won five in a row over San Francisco. The 49ers advanced to an NFL quarter-final game Saturday at Atlanta. That winner will face the survivor of next Sunday's game between Arizona and Minnesota for a berth in the Super Bowl

January 31 at Miami. On the winning drive, Young riddled the same Packers defence that

sacked him a career-high nine times on November 1 in a 36-22 loss. Young completed 7 of 9 passes for 76 yards in 1:53, then jumped for joy.

Owens, mobbed by his teammates, was in tears on the side-

"When he made that catch, he almost lost (control of his emotions)." 49ers coach Steve Mariucci said. "He was frustrated because he dropped a couple passes. I told him to have a short memory, forget it."

Also in tears was Green Bay defender Reggie White, who walked off the field for the final time into retirement. "Sorry we weren't able to do it for you," White told Packers fans.

A season marred by officiating errors continued when television replay showed 49er receiver Jerry Rice fumbled on a play when referees ruled him down, sustaining San Francisco's drive for the winning points.

The Packers moved ahead 27-23 with 1:56 to play when Brett Favre completed a 15-yard touchdown pass to Antonio Freeman.

Favre hurled a 47-yard completion to rookie Corey Bradford and Dorsey Levens followed with a 15yard, third-down run to the 49ers' 15-yard line to spark Green Bay's 89-yard march.

Wade Richey's third field goal of the game, a 40-yard kick, had given San Francisco a 23-20 lead with 6:13 to play.

Richey's career-longest 48-yard

field goal had given the 49ers a 17 lead 12:48 into the third qui but Ryan Longwell pulled Packers even with 11:50 to with a 37-yard field goal.

Young had equalised at 17-17 for San Francisco six minutes into the second half on his second touchdown pass of the game to Greg Clark, this one an 8-yard effort.

Dorsey Levens scored on a two yard run with 31 seconds remaining in the second quarter to Green Bay a 17-10 half-time-in

The Packers' first touchde came on Brett Favre's two-yang toss to Antonio Freeman on the first play of the second quarter, giving Green Bay a 10-7: Jest before Richey's 34-yard field goal equalised for the 49ers.

San Francisco had taken a 7-3 lead on Clark's one-yard touch down catch from Young after Green Bay scored first 201 Longwell's 23-yard field goal:

The 49ers had signed remed defensive end Charles Haley 10 boost their pass rush. Haley, 34. is the only player in NFL history to play on five Super Bowl champ! ons. He retired two years ago with back pain.

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Sean Penn .. in THE GAME

Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:30,

PHILADELPHIA '2'

Bruce Willis & Richard Gere .. in THE JACKAL

Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10,30

**PLAZA** 

Comedian Mohammad Huneidi ., in SAEEDI AT THE **AMERICAN** 

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

UNIVERSITY

CONCORDE

Jim Carrie.. in LIAR...LIAR Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:15, 8:15. Al Pacino & Robert De Niro.. in

**HEAT** Show: 10:00 Adel Imam .. in RISALA ILAL WALI Shows: 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

TEL:5934793 GALLERIA 1

ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Sharon Stone & Dustin Hoffman .. in

SPHERE

Shows: 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

GALLERIA 2

ABDOUN
www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Helena Bonham & Linus Roache .. in

WINGS OF THE DOVE Shows: 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 Hisham Yanes Thesira

Watch out for the new play

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

## LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



#### Football association to distribute JD100,000

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AMMAN — The Jordan Football Association (JFA) is expected to distribute JD100,000 to the Premier League's clubs within the coming few weeks. The JFA will also soon finalise a deal for next season with the consortium in charge of marketing the league. The two sides faced a controversial situation when the federation cancelled the 1998 league with five weeks remaining following a controversial call by the referee which led to a boycott by the clubs.

#### Maintenance to start

#### at Amman stadium

AMMAN - The Amman International Stadium is expected to close down in order to get it ready for the Aug. 15-31, 1999 Pan-Arab Games. Al Hussein Youth City Director Abdul Ghani Tabalat said the Games committee in charge of construction will soon start maintenance work on the city's facilities. He added that the procedures include replacing the stadium's lawn, maintaining the drainage system, upgrading audio-visual transmission and constructing a car park with a capacity for 1800 vehicles.

#### Karate teams to have joint camp with Greeks

AMMAN — The Jordan Karate Federation has decided to host the Greek men's and women's teams in February. They are expected to hold a joint training camp and friendly matches with Jordan's national

#### Committee to evaluate Asian

#### Games results

AMMAN - Ministry of Culture and Youth Secretary-General Thougan Obeidat Tuesday heads the first meeting of a committee in charge of re-evaluating Jordan's participation in the Asian Games, which were held in Bangkok Dec. 6-20. The committee is expected to submit its recommendations to Minister of Culture and Youth Talal Sata'an Al Hassan to review them with the Jordanian Olympic



German driver Jutta Kleinschmidt and co-driver Ima Thorner from Sweden drive their Mitsubishi Pajero during the third stage of the Granada-Dakar rally between Agadir and Tan-Tan, Morocco. The team leads the race in their category (AP photo)

Suker may join Panathinaikos

Vierklau wants to quit Tenerife

for Holland and joined Tenerife in 1997 from Vitesse Arnhem.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

THE HAGUE (AFP) — Dutch international defender Ferdy Vierklau said Monday that he

r wants to quit Spanish first division strugglers Tenerife after a financial row that has lasted

several months. "We are already actively seeking another club for Ferdy," the player's

agent, Henk van Ginkel, said. Vierklau returned to Holland at the weekend after failing to

reach agreement with Tenerife. The 25-year-old defender has played eight internationals

MELBOURNE (AFP) — British sailors Richard Elphinstone and Thomas Makey scored

their second win of the International Cadet World yachting Championships here Monday.

win heat four of the 10 race series in the only class raced Monday. The British crew won

comfortably from Argentinians Juan Lupo and Ayelan Gabin and another British crew of

Sam Carter and Rich Harding. With 1st. 11th, 5th and 1st placings, Elphinstone and Makey

totalled 18 points, four behind leaders Gonzalo Pollitzer and Martin Manrique of Argentina

World championship sailors set course for Olympics

MADRID (AFP) — Croatian World Cup star Davor Suker — unsettled at Real Madrid

would be on his way to Greek club Panathinaikos, according to Spanish media reports on Monday, Panathiniakos have offered S6.3 million for Subar with Spanish media reports on

the 1999 World Cup finals in France, the sports newspaper Marca reported.

British close on Argentine crew in yacht race

Ephinstone and Makey led all the way in the light 10-knot south south-easterly breeze to win heat four of the 10

who finished 10th on Monday after their 2-1-1 start to the championships.

## Participating countries, marketing agreements to be finalised this week

## Iraqi confirmation brings number of competing countries to 12

By Aleen Bannayan

AMMAN - Officials hope the number of countries taking part in next summer's Pan-Arab Games as well as agreements regarding marketing and television coverage rights will be finalised within the coming week.

Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) Vice-President Mouaffaq Al Fawwaz said Dec. 31 was earlier set as the final date for confirming participation but many countries had not yet

Iraq and Qatar Monday confirmed participation bringing the number of

countries taking part to 12.

Iraq notified the organising committee that a 400-strong delegation would take part in 24 sports. Fawwaz said the organising com-

mittee was still awaiting word from the countries to finalise the list of events in the two-week tournament. "We will know that within the com-

ing week. It is of utmost importance to have the final number of teams and events for the success of all organisational aspects," Fawwaz Monday told the Jordan Times.

He said that the preliminary number of 27 events was very high and expected it to drop. The Beirut Games had 19 countries taking part in 20 sports events.

"Any event with less than five countries taking part will be can-celled. That will also make it easier for TV coverage and other aspects in the daunting task of organising such a

mega event." Fawwaz added.

Insiders said the late confirmation by some countries is probably affected by varied reasons; athletes from North African countries might have reservations about taking part in the Games which coincides with other international events such as the African Tournament and the World Athletics Championships. Officials expected the strain between Gulf countries and Iraq to also affect the Games.

The JOC official said the Saudi firm, RAF, was most likely to win the marketing rights with \$1.5 million paid to Jordan in addition to 70 per cent of any additional income.

Television coverage rights had also not been finalised, with recent reports estimating that JTV needed JD6 million to be able to acquire equipment and manpower to cover the event properly.

Fawwaz noted that the construction of facilities was going ahead as planned with 25 sport facilities, including three sport cities, having been finalised to host the Games which will include 27 events for men and 19 for women.

As for the technical aspect of preparing Jordan's teams Fawwaz noted that only a few federations were adopting a carefully thought out strategy and were preparing their teams in a serious manner.

"Most federations, apart from handball, volleyball, and tackwondo have not shown a serious attitude in deal-

ing with the challenge. We should move fast to remedy this situation." Fawwaz noted.

He said that a committee charged with assessing Jordan's recent participation in the 13th Asian Games would meet Tuesday and discuss recent results to chart out a new plan for the federations.

Jordan only managed five medals, four by taekwondo, in the event. Most athletes failed to even match their own record set in the country.

Fawwaz warned of a wide gap between sports federations and ath-letes which led to the dismal Jordanian showing at the Asian

With many officials and insiders calling for an immediate change in the sports federations which should have taken place in September, the ministry has so far not taken that step. Informed sources also suggest that change would affect only four out of over 20 federations, and surprisingly exclude federations whose athletes produced below par results.

After a recent visit to Amman, the Arab Ministerial Committee examining Jordan's preparations for the Games underlined their support for the Amman Games, saying that they would recommend to the Arab League that Jordan receives addition-

al funding and assistance. Since the Arab Sports Federation (ASF) advanced the date of the upcoming Games to 1999 instead of 2001, the Council of Arab Sports

Ministers increased aid to the Kingdom to enable it to prepare infrastructure and update sports facil-

Aid from the Arab League has been raised to \$200,000 while the Council of Arab Ministers will grant \$1 million instead of \$700,000.

Additional sponsorship for Jordan's bid will be garnered through lowering the 50 per cent ASF margin of profit on promotion and television coverage.

The Jordanian government has earmarked JD18 million for the event including the construction of a multipurpose indoor stadium with a capacity for 7,000 spectators; an Olympicsize swimming pool; a track and field stadium, in addition to acquiring and upgrading facilities with electronic timing machines and other needs.

Lebanon, which hosted the 8th Pan-Arab Games last summer, received \$28 million from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to help in construction of sport facilities destroyed during the civil war.

The Amman Games will be followed by the first Arab Paralympics. The Pan-Arab Games have only been held eight times: Alexandria in 1953. Beirut 1957. Casablanca 1961. Cairo 1965. Damascus 1976. Morocco 1985, Damascus 1992 and Beirut 1997.

## Seeds advance in Auckland

AUCKLAND (AFP) Austria's Barbara Schett swept past struggling German Elena Wagner 6-1, 6-0 to get past the first round for the first time in four appearances at the Auckland WTA tournament here Monday.

Second seed Silvia Farina of Italy, ranked 19th in the world, also enjoyed a useworkout against Germany's Andrea Glass 6-4, 7-5 to set up a secondagainst round match Meghann American Shaughnessy.

Shaughnessy beat Italy's Laura Golarsa 6-1, 6-4. Eighth-seed Vento Alejandra Venezuela suffered an early

scare when she lost the first set to Germany's Marlene Weingartner.

> But Velappan noted that each continent has its own

Although the proposal would be financially attractive to clubs in developing countries, he warned it might disrupt their growth.

looked at very deeply. A study should be undertaken in cooperation with all the confederations in FIFA in order to see if it's feasible,"

## Asian soccer chief blasts two-year World Cup plan

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) - A proposal by the FIFA president to hold the World Cup every two years could cheapen the tournament. Asian football chief Peter

Velappan warned Monday. Velappan, general-secretary of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), said staging the World Cup biennially could reduce the spectacle of what is now the most popular sporting event

"The organising of the the World Cup is an undaunting challenge, requiring years of really hard work. Once in four years seem to be rea-Velappan told sonable,"

"It might lose it's charm and spectacle. Right now, people wait and anticipate. There's a lot of build-up. If things become frequent, it might also become cheap." FIFA president Sepp

Blatter has sparked a new global debate with his idea to stage the World Cup finals every two years.

tournaments, regional championships and national associations are building up their own professional leagues.

"The proposal needs to be

More co-hosting of World

Cups could enable the tournument to be staged more FIFA vice-president sees problems

LONDON (AFP) - FIFA vice-president David Will on Monday admitted that changing the World Cup to every two years would create "enormous problems," but insisted he would keep an open mind about the plan The proposal has been put forward by FIFA president Sepp Blatter, and Will, the British Football Associations' repre-

sentative on the world governing body, concedes the first he heard of the idea was in the media. The Scot stressed he shared Blatter's desire to maintain international soccer's place in the spotlight and would be more that willing to discuss the matter at executive level.

But he intimated that, in his view, the tournament might be devalued by abandoning its present four-year cycle - echo-

ng widespread fears that more might produce less. Will said: "This has not as yet been discussed at executive meetings and members like myself are hearing it now for the first time, but we would not reject any suggestion out of hand.

"When an idea is proposed by the president of FIFA then it deserves a fair hearing as to its potential merits, but I have to say I can foresee enormous problems. "There would be logistical concerns because of the sheer level of organisation required to prepare for and produce a

successful World Cup tournament. "There is also the matter of the confederations having their own competitions, notably the likes of the European Championships and the African Nations Cup."

But Will added he recognised Blatter's motive was to retain the status of the international game ahead of the burgeoning club tournaments spearheaded through the European Champions' League. He explained: "For me the most important part of what Sepp Blatter said was his anxiety to preserve the national teams

and that is a desire to shared by the rest of us and gives us all anxiety. "But I would say being every four years does without doubt give the World Cup its special quality and there would be the danger of a biennial event losing that."

frequently. With Japan and Korea co-hosting the 2002 World Cup finals, Velappan said this would be an experiment to assess the feasibili-

ty of the FIFA proposal. If this proves to be satisfactory, it is possible in the future for the World Cup to be hosted by more than one country. If this works out, then it may be feasible to hold the event every two

years," he added. South Korean football officials east doubt on Blatter's proposal however, "We are not totally

opposed to his idea. But European teams may have difficulties because of their tight game schedule," said Ka Sam-Hyon, a senior Korea Football Association

Other KFA officials played down the report as Blatter's personal views.

The proposal was also greeted with scepticism in "Personally speaking, it

may be all but impossible in view of the crowded schedof football events, including those at home." said Hiroshi Onozawa, public relations chief of the Japan Football Association.

Top JFA and Japanese World Cup organising committee officials were not available for comment. But spokesman said

were meant to be a message for Europe.

Blatter was quoted as saying: "I want World Cups every two years. National teams would thereby regain the status they deserve."

Blatter favours continental championships held in odd years with the leading sides

believed Blatter's remarks on each continent advancing to a World Cup to be held the following year, it said.

Blatter, who was elected FIFA president last June, said his proposals were a reaction to European media tycoons, including Italian Silvio Berlusconi, who are pressing for a super league of top European clubs.

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## Lecture at Randat Al-Ma'aref Schools & College

A lecture discussing the history and aspects of Mathematics in the real world will be held by Dr. Gover, a professor of Mathematics representing the University of Bradford, UK, one the leading Northern Consortium Universities. It will take place in the central library of the college on Thursday the 7th of January from 11:00 13:00 P.M. Seating arrangements strictly by booking

through the Public Relations office. Tel. 5528599 Ext. 18/30

Interested In A British University Degree

Rawdat Al-Ma'aref Schools and College welcomes Dr. Gover, a professor of Mathematics in one of the leading Northern Consortium Universities. The University of Bradford-England.

Dr.Gover will give an open seminar discussing the Foundation Year at R.A.M.S and higher education in the United Kingdom.

The seminar will be held for interested people who would like to know about the Foundation Year which is an opportunity for you to prepare for entry to a British University degree course, by taking a one-year Foundation course in Al-Ma'aref Schools and College.

This event will be held in the central library of the college on Wednesday the 6th of January at Seven P.M. Booking sets is strictly through the Public Relations Office

Tel. 5528599 Ext.18 / 30

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Olympic qualifying places will be the goal for 2,000 sailors from 60 countries competing in 16 classes at the world yachting championships starting here Monday, Yachtsmen are competing in seven Olympic classes of Soling, 49ers, Finn, Laser, Europe women, 470 men and 470 women. The Finn division represents one of the toughes competitions in the championships with the Atlanta gold medallist Poland's Mateusz Kusmerewicz and Belgium's silver medallist Sebastien Godefroid both racing. Kusnierewicz won the Australian championships which finished here last week. In the Women's 470 class Ukrainian pair Ruslana Taran and Elena Pakholchik are chasing their Carolijn (Carolijn) Brouwer, the 1998 world champion, has been in terrific form winning

third world championship in as many years. In the 90-woman Europe fleet, Dutchwoman We Sydney International Regatta last month.

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## Israel moves ahead with law against return of Golan, Arab east Jerusalem

Israeli parliament adopted in a first reading Monday a law toughening the conditions for any return of the Golan Heights to Syria or the handover of Arab east Jerusalem to the Palestinians.

Deputies in the 120-member Knesset voted 55 to 35 with 18 abstentions to approve the bill, which would require that any territorial concessions on the Golan or Arab east Jerusalem be approved by at least 61 members of parliament as well as in a national referendum.

The current law allows territorial concessions of annexed territory to be adopted by a relative majority in parliament.

The bill must now be considered by the Knesset law committee and be approved in a second and third reading by the full parliament to become law.

Heights from Syria in 1967 and annexed the strategic plateau in December 1981.

More than 13,000 Israeli settlers live in the Golan as well as some 17,000 Druze, most of whom remain loyal to Damascus.

Syria is demanding the return of the whole of the Golan in exchange for a peace

Israel's former Labour-led government agreed to the principle of exchanging Golan territory for peace, but negotiations between the two sides were suspended in February

Since the nationalist right came to power in May 1996 elections, Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu bas refused to resume the negotiations where they left off, insisting all future talks be held without any preconditions.

Following the vote, Labour whip Elie Goldschmidt said some of his party's members backed the bill because it was in line with the policies of slain former Labour Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

"I am in favour of the bill because it does not rule out a withdrawal from the Golan but only says such a decision must be approved by a referendum, and Rabin himself backed this," Goldschmidt told AFP.

But the leftist Meretz party strongly opposed the measure and accused the Labour Party of "political schizophrenia." "Rabin was ready to give up

the Golan and now they are

backing a law that aims to prevent any pullback." Meretz deputy Haim Oron said.

liminary approval to the Golan bill in July, an official Syrian newspaper described the decision as a "declaration of war" and a "direct challenge to the whole international community and the United Nations." Israel also occupied Arab

east Jerusalem during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and quickly annexed the sector as part of its "eternal capital." The Palestinians hope to

make Arab east Jerusalem. home to some 200,000 Arabs and around 160,000 Jewish settlers, the capital of an independent Palestinian state in the

Under the Oslo peace accords, the future of the city is to be negotiated between the two sides although all Israel's main political parties oppose any loss of sovereignty over

## Iraqi leadership holds military talks

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein headed a meeting of the country's leadership Monday for talks on the army's status after U.S. and British missile strikes, the official INA news agency said.

The meeting of the evolutionary Command Revolutionary Council (RČC) and ruling Baath party officials followed a cabinet meeting Sunday during which Saddam vowed to resist the Western allies' patrol of "no-fly" zones.

The commander of the northern zone, Ezzat Ibrahim, and southern zone, General Ali Hassan Al Majid, both stated "the determination of the people and armed forces to sacrifice themselves and fight the enemy aggression," INA said.

Iraq does not recognise the no-fly zones, which are not directly covered by U.N. resolutions. The Allied forces argue the zones are covered by U.N. resolutions calling on Baghdad to respect human rights. There were two incidents last week between Allied planes and Iraqi ground forces in the no-fly zones and Iraq has threatened to shoot down any "enemy" plane entering its

But the United States and Britain, which patrol the zones. have vowed to maintain them.

Turkey allows U.S. and British planes to use its southern Incirlik base to maintain the northern no-fly zone created in 1991 to protect Iraq's Kurdish population from aerial

## **NEWS IN BRIEF**

#### Egyptian student stabs mother

CAIRO (AFP) --- An Egyptian student infuriated by his mother's nagging stabbed her 15 times, leaving her in serious condition, police said Monday. Fourth-year engineering student Issam Abdullah, 29, was upset because his 57-year-old mother, Soraya Ismail, kept telling him off for not studying and for staying out late with his friends. During an argument in their home Sunday in the north Cairo suburb of Medinat Nasser he stabbed her 15 times. She was taken to hospital in a serious condition, police said.

#### Eight-year-old girl hangs herself

MANCHESTER (AFP) - An eight-year-old British girl committed suicide by hanging herself with a skipping rope following an argument with her mother, police said on Monday. The girl took her own life in her bedroom after having a row with her mother on Saturday at the family home near the northern city of Manchester. She was found by her mother, and although medics were alerted immediately they were unable to revive her. No details have been released about the reasons for

#### U.S. murder rate at lowest level in 30 years

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States' murder rate dropped in 1997 to its lowest level in three decades, largely due to a fall in gun violence, the Justice Department announced on Saturday. The nation's murder rate was 6.8 per 100,000 people in 1997, the lowest level since 1967 when 6.2 per 100,000 people were killed, the Justice Department said. Much of the decline was in larger cities — those with a population of more than one million people — where the murder rate fell from 35.5 per 100,000 in 1991 to 20.3 per 100,000 in 1997.

#### Woman dies after pushed from subway platform

NEW YORK (R) — A New York man who allegedly pushed a woman off a subway platform to her death appeared in court on Monday, charged with second degree murder. At a prelintinary hearing in Manhattan Criminal Court on Monday. Andrew Goldstein, 29, of Howard Beach, Queens, was ordered to undergo a psychiatric evaluation at Manhattan's Bellevue Medical Centre. Witnesses say Goldstein approached Kendra Webdale, 32, of Manhattan on Sunday afternoon and pushed her into the path of an oncoming train at Manhattan's 23rd Street and Broadway station. Goldstein made no attempt to escape and was later apprehended by police at the station.

#### German man forgot \$1.2m lottery ticket

KIEL, Germany (R) — An elderly German who won two million marks (\$1.20 million) in a lottery in October forgot he had bought a ticket until two months later, lottery officials said on Monday. The Norwestlotto Schleswig-Holstein said the man went away on holiday after buying the ticket and forgot about it when he returned. He did not rediscover it until last Thursday.

#### Faithful thieves rob Russian church

OSCOW (AP) - Thieves robbed one of Russia's oldest and ost famous churches, taking icons, crosses and other objects. n Orthodox Church spokesman said Sunday. The robbers took wo icons, gold and silver chains, small crosses and medallions on Sunday night from the Church of the Intercession on the River Nerl, said Abbot Innokenty, the secretary of the regional liocese. The church, built in 1165, is located outside the city of Vladimir, about 160 kilometres east of Moscow. Abbot innokenty said church leaders were surprised the cathedral was obbed because the icons are not extremely valuable.

## After the Knesset gave pre-Netanyahu faces possible challenge

"In the last few days several people from Likud have appealed to me, saying I'm the person who can rehabilitate the party and can lead it to victory," Arens, 73, told Israel

"If it turns out that's the overwhelming opinion, I'll have to party leadership.

Six candidates have already said they will challenge Netanyahu in the May 17 poll, including two Likud defectors who have formed their own parties, Likud lawmaker Uzi Landau and a cabinet colleague, Rafael Eitan of the Tsomet party.

ward elections from late 2000

The bill tentatively cleared parliament last month after emerged in Netanyahu's rightist coalition River land-for-security peace agreement signed with the

A final vote was expected at 1500 GMT.

Coalition hardliners oppose the Wye deal which cleared parliament with the support of the opposition Labour Party.

net" it had provided the govemment when Netanyahu froze implementation of the agreement last month over alleged Palestinian violations.

Netanyahu has since trailed Labour Party chief Ehud Barak in opinion polls.

Monday showed Barak would chief Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, a Netanyahu by nearly 20 perspell out his political plans at a Wednesday news conference.

land-for-peace agreement.

Minister

elections in May.

Palestinian frustration has

been heightened by Prime

Netanyahu's apparent deter-

mination to keep the peace

accord on ice and continue

expanding Jewish settlements

in the run-up to early Israeli

Netanyahu has justified his

suspension of the peace

November to freeze imple- process by accusing the PNA renew security cooperation

U.S.: Iraqi aircraft probe no-fly zones

Defying Saddam's threats, the U.S.-led force has resumed

patrolling a no-fly zone in

northern Iraq after the New

Year holiday, a U.S. official

The flights were resumed

Sunday after a two-day break,

said Senior Airman Adam

said Monday.

official Iraqi INA news agency Stump, a spokesman for

Kuwaiti deputy premier arrives today on ground-breaking visit

(Continued from page 1) After the invasion which split the Arab World into proand anti-Iraqi camps, the Arab Gulf state downgraded ties with Amman, keeping a charge d'affaires to run its mission, cut economic aid to the Kingdom

news agencies as responding to embassy in Kuwait, by saying: Kuwait, everything will be

> Thousands of Israeli vehicles use the road where the

> sonnel are part of the Operation

Northern Watch, which is

Transportation Minister

"The autonomous zones in for Palestinian killers," he said on Israeli army radio.

#### Shaul Yaalom, a leader of the pro-settler National Religious Party, demanded that the army take back control over key areas overlooking the Jewish enclave in Hebron to protect the settlers from attack.

number of Kuwaiti tourists and

visitors who spend their holi-

days in the Kingdom rising

In June, former planning

minister Rima Khalaf became

the first cabinet member to

visit Kuwait at the invitation of

a Kuwaiti-based Arab eco-

Jordan has since 1991 restored ties with Oatar the

United Arab Emirates, Bahrain

and Saudi Arabia, Kuwait's

partners in the six-nation GCC.

Oman is the only GCC

member whose ties with

Jordan were not harmed by the

Gulf crisis. "Our relations with

the five GCC countries are

very normal and good in all

aspects," Kharib said. "But still

I believe that there is room to

improve and expand relations

between us all," he added.

nomic institution.

sharply.

Hebron have become a haven

The diplomats familiar with a

two-paragraph note said that it

# Dead' Romanian

## returns to life for the New Year

BUCHAREST (AFP)

Leon Iani a 25-year-old William 24 Romanian declared dead from alcoholic poisoning and taken! to the morgue on New Year's Eve made a miraculous recov. ery and a few hours later was seeing in 1999 with his fami ly, a police source said Monday. The body wa quickly moved to the town morgue. But it seemed that news of his death had been greatly exaggerated. A doctor who came to perform a autopsy four hours lake accompanied by a policeman was only able to verify that the body had disappeared, a load police source said. Puzzlet police went to his home to find his family toasting the return of the departed

ge Caroline Faraj

#### Sacked German pastor opens strip club

ARZBERG (AFP) = A German pastor, thrown out of the church after inviting

## Europhiles go ape

PARIS (AFP) — A new-borgorilla at a French zoo la paris fallen victim to the frenzy sur rounding the launch of the new European currency to zoo keepers have named Euro. "The name came name :-: rally considering when it was born, said Pierre Thivilla director of the zoo at Sain Martin-La-Plaine. The little ape was born overne Sunday to parents Yasmin and Tam Tam. Euro is the con ple's third child after Box and Atanga. Zoo officials in the state of so far not determined Emis sex as they have been units

MEXICO CITY (R) — More to the state of the s than 260,000 Mercan to have a second loaf of Christmas second to have a se ingredients in a bid to get that the line of the line

the church after inviting single pers to enliven one of he speeches, has set up his own strip club, the popular day Bild reported Monta; Wolfgang Triebe, 42, called two strippers during an detion speech while bidding in become mayor of Arzheg in October, the newspaper reported. His action infurate the church and outraged so eral members of his audient which included children of of a job, the father-of-the decided to set up his own so club, the Don Camillo dan club, offering shows at \$306 "I needed a job," he said.

## in French zoo

to approach the mother.

#### Referee hit with a hot dog asks... for protection

Pair to the Kin

lation of the same

Sales Prince H

LONDON (R) — To English referee Paul Dunit was forced to ask for pull protection after being hit by hot dog during an FA. Cu match between Okland Athletic and Chelsea During Standing near the goal-line. Athletic and Chelsea Durkin standing near the goal-line was hit by the fast food affe he allowed a Chelsea goal-line was in the process of consulting the linesman when he was hit. He then disallowed the goal A match steward said the goal. A match steward said the missile was a pastry-covern sausage roll but Durkin said was a frankfurter enclosed in bread bun. Durkin was not injured in the incident but said he would include it in his match report. Police said man was arrested. Chelse won the match 2-0.

#### Mexican royal bread to enter Guinness ·

bread, a Roman Catholic for bread, a Roman Catholic for different control of the Spanish, the Day of the National American Spanish, the Day of the Nation

# from mentor

TEL AVIV (R) — Prime Benyamin Minister Netanyahu faced a potential threat to his leadership from a former political mentor on Monday as Israel's parliament prepared to give final approval to a May 17 election date.

Former Foreign and Defence Minister Moshe Arens, who brought Netanyahu into public life in the early 1980s, said the Likud leader was responsible for defections by top lawmakers that had weakened the right-wing party.

make a decision," said Arens, who has until Sunday to ide whether to run for the

Israel's parliament planned to give final approval on Monday to a bill bringing for-

(Continued from page 1)

The presence of the settlers

is a frequent source of violent

tensions in Hebron and in

November a Palestinian

opened fire on settlers in the

same area as Monday's shoot-

rising anger in the Palestinian

territories over the Israeli gov-

emment's decision in

"Hussein and his government

should understand that we will

continue to enforce these no-fly

Saddam told his cabinet that

Baghdad will resist the no-fly

zones as a "violation of Iraq's

sovereignty and air space," the

zones vigorously." he added.

(Continued from page 1) said Sunday.

The latest attack came amid

ing, but wounded no one.

to next May.

divisions over the U.S.-brokered Wye Palestinians in October.

Labour cancelled the "safety

The latest survey published in the Maariv newspaper on get 51 per cent of the vote compared with 41 per cent for Netanyahu if elections were held this week. Retired army political novice forming a new centrist party, would defeat centage points, according to the poll. Shahak was due to

and expelled tens of thousands of Jordanian workers — many of Palestinian origin.

a question concerning the reopening of the Jordanian When he [Khatib] comes to Kuwait turned down several

overtures after 1991 to mend ties, mainly because of a strong popular anti-Jordanian sentiment, especially among members of parliament.

militants in areas under its

Netanyahu made no imme-

But Ehud Barak, the head of

the opposition Labour Party

and one of several centrists

hoping to defeat Netanyahu in

Operation Northern Watch,

which enforces a no-fly area

above the 36th parallel in Iraq.

no-fly zone." Stump said.

"We continue to enforce the

Citing operational security

reasons. Stump refused to com-

ment on whether the force.

which includes British planes,

More than 45 U.S. and

diate comment on Monday's

mentation of the Wye River of failing to act against violent

Benyamin

control.

Two Israeli women injured in Hebron attack

added.

Noam Amon, a spokesman for the Hebron settlers, accused the army of failing to protect Israelis in the city, saying the "laxity of the authorities has allowed attackers to find refuge in the [Palestinian] autonomous areas."

A Delta 2 launch vehicle takes off on Sunday from launch pad 17-B at Cape

Canaveral Air Force Station carrying NASA's Mars Polar Lander spacecraft and

Deep Space 2 spacecraft to begin an eleven-month journey to Mars. The mission

will land near the Martian South Pole digging soil samples while gathering other

But relations began warming

up gradually when Jordan

began to distance itself from

Baghdad, especially after shel-

tering two top Iraqi defectors in

Kuwaitis] are ready to resume

contacts with Jordan now as

local considerations appear to

have eased," one Jordanian

official told the Jordan Times.

His Majesty in Washington,

was considered as an excellent

gesture and a step forward," he

Kuwait, which resumed

direct flights to Amman for the

first time since Iraq's invasion

of Kuwait in July 1997, has

steadily expanded bilateral

business ties with Jordan.

Kuwaiti investment in the

banking and hotel industry is

also up. businessmen said.

"It seems that they [the

data and transmitting the information back to Earth (AFP photo)

August 1995.

attack took place each day and they can't all be armoured to protect them from bullets,"

the May election, issued a statement calling on the PNA to catch the attackers and British planes and 1,400 per-

of Adana.

refrained from ordering their expulsion.

near the southern Turkish city Meanwhile in New York. Western diplomats said Iraq on Monday notified the United Nations of its concern for the safety of British and U.S. humanitarian personnel, but

expressed concern about Iraq's ability to guarantee the safety based at the Incirlik air base and security of British and U.S. aid workers in the country, following U.S. and British air strikes against Iraqi targets last month, But the note does not explic-

itly suggest that any action should be taken in the light of the situation, the diplomats

## Israel officially heads into long election campaign

flew on Monday.

(Continued from page 1)

In a sign of obvious displeasure, Netanyahu and his hardline foreign minister Ariel Sharon did not take part in the vote. Five other deputies were absent and one abstained.

The early-elections bill was approved in a first reading on Dec. 21 by a vote of 81 to 30 and in the following days three members of Netanyahu's own Likud party - two far-right hardliners and one moderate broke away to announce they would challenge him for the prime ministership.

But according to an opinion

poll published Monday, the biggest threat to Netanyahu's from opposition Labour Party leader Ehud

Barak and a political newcomer, the centrist former army chief of staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak. The Gallup poll showed that were the elections held today,

Barak would beat Netanyahu in a head-to-head ruce by 51 per cent to 41 percent, while Lipkin-Shahak would triumph 54 to 36 per cent. Lipkin-Shahak, whom supporters liken to slain Labour

is scheduled to formally launch a new centrist party as re-election hopes will come well as his candidacy for prime minister on Wednesday. Netanyahu and Barak select-

ed the May 17 polling date over the objections of many politicians who complained that government policy, notably concerning the troubled peace process with the Palestinians, will be paralysed for more than four months by the election campaign.

The early elections became inevitable after Netanyahu defied hardline nationalists in his own camp and signed the prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, US-brokered Wye River land-

for-security agreement with the Palestinians in October. The accord requires Israel to vield control over an addition-

al 13 per cent of the West Bank to the Palestinians, a move fiercely opposed by hardliners who formed the core of Netanyahu's constituency when he was elected in May 1996. After ordering a first phase

of pullbacks from two per cent of the West Bank in November. Netanyahu froze further application of the Wye accords, accusing the Palestinian side of failing to honour its security commit-

ments under the deal. Despite objections from both

the Palestinians and the United States there appears to be little likelihood Netanyahu will move ahead with the agreement during the election cam-In numerous speeches over

the past two months Netanyahu has said a cornerstone of his campaign will be allegations t<u>hat</u> Palestinians are not trustworthy and that only a tough nationalist government can defend Israel's vital interests in difficult negotiations on a permanent peace settlement.